

GAY NOVELETTE AND 14 COMPLETE STORIES

# Breezy Stories

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19  
STAR  
AUTHORS



*Crissy and Bobby II, Martin*

PHIL PAINTER PUBLICATIONS  
YOUNG'S REALISTIC STORIES. BREEZY STORIES  
YELLOW BOOK

"I don't care how lucky you are,  
there's one *CHANCE* you  
*dare not* take!"



"**B**EFORE I tell you what it is, let me say this: In twenty years of handling salesmen, it's the No. 1 Jonah, I know. Because I once took the chance myself . . . and lost. Let me give you the picture . . .

"For years we had been trying to get a crack at some of the immense and profitable Apex business—without success . . . couldn't even get in.

"Then one day Fate dumped me down in a coast-to-coast plane in a seat right alongside Apex's president.

"What a break! What an opportunity! And did I miff it? Once on a friendly basis, he actually drank in everything I had to say about our line . . . asked a hundred questions. I thought I had done the best job of quiet, restrained selling of my career. But at Salt Lake City he asked the stewardess to switch him into the seat across the aisle and from there in he was 'icicles.'

"I couldn't understand why then, and I never knew until a chance remark I overheard months afterward revealed what had irritated him. Know what it was? My breath. It killed my chances cold . . . just as it can kill so many other men's chances.

"So I am saying to you men, now, that your breath is one of the things you dare not gamble on as long as you're working for me.

"So here's an order: Before you make your calls, help put your breath on the more agreeable side with Listerine."

You, yourself, may not realize when you have halitosis (bad breath); that's the insidious thing about it. Unknowingly, you can offend the person you are most eager to impress. That's bad . . . in business and social life.

### *The Easy Precaution*

Some cases of bad breath are due to systemic conditions. But fortunately there is a delightful, easy precaution against halitosis due to the fermentation of food particles in the mouth, which some authorities regard as its major cause.

Simply rinse the mouth with full strength Listerine Antiseptic. It quickly halts such fermentation and then overcomes the odors fermentation causes. The breath becomes sweeter, purer, and less likely to offend. Your entire mouth feels fresher.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL Co., St. Louis, Mo.

*Before business or social engagements*  
let **LISTERINE** look after your breath

# Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

**Be Healthier, Happier —  
Live Longer**

When you can get for 30 cents a safe, efficient and harmless substance and diuretic that should flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons that tend that are now doing you harm, why ever dare to have your natural sleep by getting up through the night?

Don't be a **FART HANE** and accept a substandard for Gold Medal Standard 900 Capsules, **GET YOUR KIDNEYS**—the original—the proven. Look for the Gold Medal on the handy box.

Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder may be backache, puffiness, shifting pains, burning or acidic passages. Don't accept a substitute.

# RUPTURED? Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to waddle along with trouble that gives you pain, groin heavily on this and your kidneys on legs? Get to bed tonight! Get out the Clasp. No surgery or cutting knife. Automatic adjustment and holds at rest. Springs follow every body movement with instant automatic support to ease of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Night, Week-end. Can be worn in bath, bed for aching **RUPTURE** look. Address Dr. Bentland and doctors of his or travel to day trial offer. Also adjustment from several local or mail order houses. Write: **CLIPPER BOND, Dept. 25, Broadfield, New Jersey.**

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Be an expert about this is one of the best automatic pistols made. 10" and 12" cal. 12, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100. 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200. 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 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# Little Lost Girl



*Every bit  
of love*

By LUCY AIKEN

**S**INCE midnight, Katie Kelly had been sitting by the window, waiting for them to come home, and now the dawn was breaking; birds were beginning to chirp in the trees.

"Oh, they ought to ha' been here long ago," Katie Kelly fretted. "They hadn't ought to stay out all night like this; they ought to been back hours and hours ago."

She peered out at a small, closed

car, with curtains drawn, that had stood all night on the other side of the street, a little way down. What was that car doing there, all night long? There was someone in it,—watching, maybe. Oh, the trouble there'd be if Richard Miner's mother ever found out about him and Mary!

Worn out and irritable from her long night of watching, Katie made herself a cup of tea "that strong it'd bear up an egg."

And then they came. The long, low, all but silent roadster purred quietly into the driveway, came to a stop, and Katie stepped heavily to the door.

There they were, the two of them, sitting there, looking at each other, and she knew that on the seat of the car their hands were clasped.

Looking at each other—looking and looking; and Katie, fat and unwieldy and elderly, seeing that look upon their faces, went in and shut the door, her heart turned to water within her.

There they were, Richard Miner from the "big house," heir to the great Miner fortune, and little Mary Davitt, heir to nothing at all, with no home of her own, and no family, and obliged to earn her own living.

They murmured together for a moment. They clung together. Oh, how could they part, even for a few hours, after last night!

"When—when will you tell your mother, Richard?"

"Soon! Quite soon! I want to choose the best time."

"It'll *have* to be soon now, Richard!"

"Mary, trust me!"

"Oh, I do, I do! But when, do you think?"

"Quite soon! Darling, I hate to leave you."

"Richard . . . !"

"Mary, come into the house, will you?" Katie called cautiously from the open back door. "Come into the house, child, before you have all the neigh-

bors knowing the hour you come home!"

"Shall I tell her?" Mary asked, nodding her head towards the stout, worried-looking woman at the door.

"Heavens, no! Mother must be the first one."

"When, then? Richard, it must be soon! When?"

"Oh, Mary, I don't know! Mother's queer; I'll have to watch my step—go easy—break it to her gently."

"Mary, if you don't get out of that car and come into the house, I'll come out and bring you in! As for you, Richard Miner, you should know better than to do a thing like this. All night! And here it is daylight! Come into this house at once!"

But how could she have the heart to scold? Mary's face—the young, shining face of her! And Richard's the same!

Memories came trooping back to Katie, memories of nights long ago in the old country. The sky'd be blue—not black the way it is here in this country at night,—blue, deep dark blue, and you could see off for miles and miles. And you'd smell the cowslips—oh, the sweetness of them! And now and then a cow with a bell tied on to it would get up and move around a little, and you'd hear the bell jangle a minute, and then it'd be still again.

Katie was young then—young and slim and black-haired and blue-eyed. All the boys for miles around had come a-courting, and a tall boy with hair as black as her own and eyes as blue, had won her, and then they'd sailed away to this new country. . . .

Mary was looking at her with shining eyes. She was breathing fast. Her lips were parted.

"You know you hadn't ought to do this," Katie said feebly.

Mary ran to her, threw her arms around her, hid her face on the broad billowy bosom.

"I'm so happy, Aunt Katie!" she said. "I'm so happy it doesn't seem



right! It seems as if some awful thing would happen to me for being so happy!"

"Och!" cried Katie horrified. "Don't tempt fate! Don't say such things!"

Across the street, the small closed car started quietly, rolled swiftly off down the road.

Richard Miner's mother was smooth and crisp and silky; beautifully cared for; dressed in clothes so simple that they shrieked aloud of costliness.

She sat in her big, sunny living-room and gazed steadily and thoughtfully at the girl who believed she loved Richard.

Although one of them was young and one not so young, although there was no blood relationship between them, still they looked alike in a curious, subtle way. It was the look in their faces, the determined, ruthless look, that shone through the hard, bright smiles and pleasant words; determined selfishness, that was what made their faces alike.

And now a look of scorn came over the older face. Mrs. Miner's nostrils expanded fastidiously and her mouth drew down at the corners.

"A girl who lives with Kate Kelly, our old coachman's widow!" she said.

"Seems queer you didn't know it!" Juliet answered negligently. "Right here on the place, as you might say."

"Well, I know it now!" Mrs. Miner returned briskly. "All night, you say? But how do you know, Juliet?" She looked curiously at the tall, slim girl, sunk down into the davenport, round knees crossed, showing long, silk legs.

"Why, I just happened to hear about it, and I took occasion to make sure," Juliet said. She spoke with a studied drawl. Her eyes strayed away towards the window. "Spring came with a rush this year, didn't it?" she asked, indifferently. The broad sweep of smooth lawn was starred with daffodils, planted in the grass, and around the boundaries of the place flowering dogwood

made a mass of shimmering beauty.

"Well, she'll have to go, that's all," Richard's mother announced.

"I don't know how you're going to make her do that. She's a free and independent person, I suppose."

Mrs. Miner smiled. It was a crafty, unpleasant smile to see—such a smile as one of the poisoning princesses of ancient Italy might have smiled. With her eyes half closed, she shook her head slightly—just barely moved it from side to side.

"She'll go," she stated; "I'll find a way to make her go. I have other plans for Richard. I certainly do not propose to have a factory girl for a daughter-in-law."

"I b'lieve she's in an office," Juliet murmured.

"Same thing."

"Well, I'll go along," Juliet drawled.

"You did quite right to come to me, Juliet," Mrs. Miner said. "I'll attend to it; don't worry."

"Oh, I don't worry," Juliet protested; "I've got nothing to worry about. Just thought you ought to know, that's all."

Mrs. Miner smiled at her. Acting; it didn't deceive her, though. Juliet wanted Richard—wanted him just as she had wanted a little roadster when she was only twelve years old—and got it; just as she had wanted a foreign car when she was eighteen—and got that, too; and, at twenty, the beautiful, gleaming white yacht, the *Juliet*, the queen of all the craft in the harbor. Juliet got what she wanted—always; and now she was pretending she didn't want it!

## II

KATIE KELLY, sitting on her tiny back porch, her huge body wedged into the rocker that had somehow grown too narrow for her lately, saw Richard Miner's mother stepping briskly along through the

garden towards her small brick house.

"I knew it! I knew it!" Katie sighed. She put a hand on each arm of her chair, and "h'isted" herself up, stepped ponderously across the porch and through the house to the front door. She had no doubt about where Mrs. Miner was going, and she knew why.

The old-fashioned bell clanged, and, smoothing down her crisp white apron, Katie opened the door.

"Good-day, Mrs. Miner, ma'am!" she said, flustered and breathing loudly. "Step in; step in to the parlor."

She drew back and bobbed a sort of curtsy, for she came of a generation which had been expected to show some respect for its betters. She placed a chair, rolled up the shades, and then sat down on her shiny hair-cloth sofa.

"It's quite warm for this time of year," she said.

Mrs. Miner nodded briefly. "Kate, what's this I hear about Richard and some working girl who lives with you?" she said abruptly.

"Oh! Mary, you mean?" Katie answered nervously.

"I haven't the least idea what her name is," Mrs. Miner rapped out. "What in the world have you been thinking of, Kate, to let it go on—without speaking to me?"

"Why—why, it ain't anything real-ly," Katie said. "He comes down through the yard in his car, and, if she's around, he takes her to ride, same as any young feller might do."

"Every night, I hear."

"Well, it's been such nice weather for riding——"

"Who is this—er—girl?" Mrs. Miner's pause before the last word made it sound almost insulting.

Katie's round, good-natured face flushed angrily.

"She's as good a girl as you'd care to meet," she said indignantly. "She's a sweet, pretty thing besides, and 'tis

nothing at all against her that she has to earn her own living!"

"What do you know about her before she came here?"

"Well, I know she came from Granby, and her folks are all dead, and she went to business college, and then she got a place in an office here."

"In other words, you know nothing at all!"

"I know all I need to know."

Mrs. Miner held up an imperious hand. "Now, that'll do, Kate!" she said in a sharp, decisive voice. "I don't intend to let this affair go on; I won't have it; I have other plans for Richard. You've lived here in this house, rent free, ever since Patrick died; you may stay here as long as you live—if you do the right thing. If not—well, you'll have to find another place to live, immediately!"

Katie's heart gave a great jump and then fell back again. Leave the little red brick house where she'd lived so many years! And where in the world would she ever find another place with no stairs to climb, and her so hefty she couldn't climb them? Leave the little backyard with its rows of vegetables and flowers and the pleasant porch where she had her big rocker! Leave her home! Leave the house where Patrick had brought her, just a young wife, so many years ago!

Her mouth dropped open and her eyes were round with astonishment as she gazed at Mrs. Miner.

"You'd not drive me out of my home, Mrs. Miner, and me here so many years!" she protested.

"That rests entirely with you!"

"How does it rest with me? What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to keep your hands off; I want you not to interfere. That girl has got to leave here *at once*; and if you tell Richard one word about seeing me, you'll find yourself looking for another home; and I needn't tell you it won't be easy, at your age."

"You send her away from here, it

won't make no difference!" Katie said sullenly. "He'll follow her; he'll find out where she is, even if I don't tell."

"Oh, no, he won't!" Mrs. Miner returned, and there was something ominous in her voice.

Steps came briskly and lightly along the gravel path by the side of the house. Someone skipped up the steps and in at the back door.

"Yoo-hoo!" a young gay voice cried.

Katie flushed and started in her chair and picked up the corner of her apron and began to pleat it nervously.

"It's her now," she said.

Mary appeared in the door, blushed, started back.

"Oh, I didn't know you had company," she said.

"Come in! Come in!" Katie said, nervous and jerky. "This is Mrs. Miner, from the big house—Richard's mother."

"Oh!" cried Mary, joyously, and she started towards Mrs. Miner, stopped suddenly and flushed painfully, fidgeted uneasily, taken aback by the expression on that hostile, cold, determined face.

"Mrs. Miner's heard; she's come down here——" Katie stammered.

"That'll do, Kate!" Mrs. Miner's crisp voice cut her short. "I'll explain to—to—this young person!"

Mary was breathing fast, flushing and paling, trembling.

Mrs. Miner's eyes roved over her from head to foot, slowly, insolently; then she looked back again at the exquisite Maytime face of the girl.

"Sit down, if you please," she said; "I want to talk to you."

Breathless and quivering, Mary sat down on the edge of a chair and gazed at her with big, anxious eyes.

"You look like a good, sensible girl," Mrs. Miner began; "good-hearted, too, I'd say you were. You wouldn't want to cause trouble—perhaps heartbreak—to another girl, would you?"

"What—girl?" Mary faltered.

"Richard's sister, Margaret."

"How could I cause any trouble to her?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Margaret is in love—deeply in love—with a man who'll be a splendid match for her. He's visiting here now. He's very much interested, but hasn't said anything definite. We all hope that nothing will happen, that nothing unpleasant will come up—to prevent things turning out right for Margaret."

"But how—what have I got to do with it?"

"Oh, don't be so dense, my dear girl! You're a little working girl, aren't you? Nobody knows your people, do they? You aren't really a good match for Richard Miner, are you?"

"I—why, I don't know."

"If anything happens to hurt Margaret, it will break Richard's heart; she's his favorite of all the family."

"But what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to go right away—now—today—and stay away until things are arranged satisfactorily between Margaret and her friend."

"Go away! Where? What shall I tell Richard?"

"You'll tell him nothing; he hates good-byes. You'll go without seeing him."

Mary's fingers wound themselves together. She looked, troubled and anxious, from Mrs. Miner to Katie Kelly.

"But I don't know where to go; I've never been anywhere!"

"I'll attend to all that. You'll go to New York, to a hotel. I'll send you in a car—today. You'll go to a hotel and there you'll stay till you hear from us."

Mary stared, frightened, upset.

"You'd be glad to do this for Richard's sister, wouldn't you?" Mrs. Miner asked in a smooth, guileful voice. "For Richard, too?"

"It's just that I'm sort of startled, kind of scared."

"I'll see to it for you. Everything'll be attended to; you need have no wor-

ry. All we want is to avoid any unpleasantness of any kind until after Margaret's affair is settled."

"And then, afterwards, I'll come back?"

"Yes, you'll come back."

Katie Kelly rose and left the room with a heavy sigh.

"Kate hates to have you go. Only natural she should. Now, I'll send a car for you in about an hour. You'll be all ready, and start right off. Then, everything'll be all right for all of us."

"And Richard—Richard knows I'm going?"

"Oh, he wants you to go! You see, if you stay here, he'll be seeing you. It'll mean the end of Margaret's hopes."

"If—if Richard wants me to go, I will."

"Must I tell you so again? He wants you to go, now—at once. It'll only make it harder—for *him*—to put it off!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Come, come! You ought to have more gumption than this, if you're the kind of girl Richard could care for. Come, come, my dear girl!"

"Yes! All right! I'm all right!"

"That's a good girl! Be ready in an hour. The car'll come for you. I'll give the chauffeur an envelope with instructions for you, so you won't feel the least bit strange when you get to New York; I'll write it all out for you. And, of course, the money; if we send you to New York, we'll pay for it. The chauffeur'll hand it to you. You will be ready?"

"Yes, I will!"

"Then that's all right! . . . Katie! Where's Katie?"

"Here I am, Mrs. Miner!"

"Oh, yes! Well, Katie, Miss—Miss—er—I can't think of her name—is a good sensible girl, just as I thought she was, and she's going to New York, and stay there till we send for her. It's the best thing all around, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mrs. Miner, if you say so."

"I do say so! You help her get ready."

"Yes, Mrs. Miner!" . . .

Mrs. Miner sat down at the desk in the room where she interviewed servants and tradespeople—a bare office-like room, and a bare businesslike desk. She reached under the flap of the desk and pushed a button.

"Send Kennedy in," she said, when a maid appeared.

She turned her back to the door, busied herself with some papers. Kennedy came to the door and tapped.

"Come in, Kennedy!" she said, without glancing at him, and left him standing there, fidgeting, shifting from one foot to the other, turning his cap in his hands.

Suddenly she stood up, faced him, turned her hard eyes full upon him.

"Kennedy!" she said, and her voice rose menacingly, "Kennedy, I know you took a roll of bills I left in the car the other day!"

It was a plain, flat statement. Her eyes never wavered; she pinned him there before her and watched coldly as he squirmed.

He opened his mouth, ran a finger around his collar, moved uneasily, shook his head from side to side, glanced at her and away again.

"Where is it?" she rapped out.

"I—I—ain't got it," he stammered.

"Two hundred dollars!" she said. "And you stole it!"

He drew back his lips from his teeth in an ugly snarl. She had left the money there for him to take, it was a trap. This fine, rich dame had laid a trap for him, and he had walked into it. He pushed his lips together in a sullen pout and looked at her from under knitted eyebrows.

"You stole two hundred dollars!" she repeated. "Where is it?"

"I tell you, I ain't got it!" he snarled.

"I know that!" she informed him. "And I know where it went, too! I

know when you took it. It's easy enough to have people watched."

He sneered at her in bravado.

"Well," he said, "well, what you going to do about it? Go ahead and do it!"

"You could be arrested," she said slowly, "and thrown into jail. And then, when you came out, you could steal some more money and go back again. You'd never get another job—a jailbird!"

"I never stole any money before," he said. "The roll was there on the floor of the car. I kept it two days; and then you began to holler round how you got your pocket picked in a store, and it was took out of your bag. I knew you'd never miss no two hundred dollars, so I kept it!"

She smiled at him, an icy, scornful smile.

"An honest man!" she observed.

"Well, well, what you going to do?" he said feverishly. "Go on and get it done, that's all!"

She nodded thoughtfully, sat down

at her desk and turned over some papers. Sweating, Kennedy stood waiting.

"Well, I'm not going to have you arrested," she said at last; "provided you do a job I've got for you, and do it exactly as I tell you—without a word to anyone."

He scowled at her. "What do you want me to do?" he asked sullenly.

"I want you to take the old 1930 Cadillac and drive to New York in it; I want you to take one passenger and leave her at the Biltmore. And then I want you to keep right on going in the Cadillac—and not come back!"

"Not never?"

"Never! You're to take the car—and go on!"

"I can have the old bus for my own?"

"For your own! And you'll be paid for going, too, one hundred dollars!"

He gasped.

"But understand one thing! If you speak of this to anyone, or if you come back here, you'll go to jail! I've got



"You'll help me, Aunt Katie"

witnesses; you were seen taking the money and seen spending it. If you disobey my orders I'll show no mercy!"

"All right," he muttered.

"Your passenger is Mary Davitt, the girl who lives with Kate Kelly in the little house down the garden."

Richard's girl; the little fair-haired girl from the country. Kennedy knew her.

"You can take her along with you where you're going, if you want to—if she'll go," Mrs. Miner suggested with a sneer. "You understand what I'm doing, don't you? She's to disappear, without a word—with *you*! You understand?"

"Yes, I understand," he mumbled.

"Then start! Now—this minute! The old car's all ready, as you know. Go and call for her and start immediately!"

"All right."

She handed him an envelope—a thick stuffed-up envelope. Money.

"Give this to Mary," she said. Then she picked up some folded bills, held them out. "A hundred dollars and the car for you!" she said.

He took the money, fingered it, looked from it to her face.

"Start!" she said.

"All right," he said, with a cowed look at this terrible woman before him, and he turned and stumbled out of the room. . . .

"You'll have to help me, Aunt Katie!" Mary ran out to the kitchen, whirled round and round excitedly. She was going to do something for Richard, for Richard's mother, for his sister. A hard thing it was going to be, but after all it was for him.

"What's—what's the matter?" she asked and stared, astonished, at Katie.

Katie was crying. Tears rolled down her cheeks; she sniffed and blew her nose. ("Oh, the little thing—all so innocent and unsuspecting! Oh, if only I was younger; if only I wasn't the size I am! But where in the world

would I find a place like this to live in—my own yard and garden—and no steps to climb?")

Mary ran to her and threw her arms around the enormous shoulders.

"You don't want me to go!" she cried happily; "you're crying because I'm going! I never thought you'd care."

"Well, I do," Kate mumbled. She wiped her eyes, sniffed again, and blew her nose. "Sure, if you're going, you'd better be getting ready. That woman said within an hour, and she means what she says."

"I only wish I could see Richard."

"No! Don't do the least thing she told you not to!" Katie warned. "Maybe it'll come out all right this way—if you don't cross her."

"Yes, and anyhow he'll be writing to me, and telephoning, I s'pose. And you'll tell him, if you get a chance, that I *wanted* to see him, won't you?"

"I dunno if I'll see him," Katie said in a low voice.

"Oh, yes, you'll see him! He'll be down here."

"I dunno whether I'll have a chance to tell him," Katie said. ("Oh, I wish she wouldn't go!" she thought. "I wish something'd warn her! I wish something—anything—would happen so she wouldn't go!")

"Well, if you do get a chance," Mary said.

"There's the car," Katie told her. "There's Kennedy sitting out in front now."

"All right; I'll be right there. Tell him."

"Aw, I wish I had the nerve to stand up to that woman," Katie thought, with an inward groan. "No good'll come to the child from this—and me not having the nerve to speak."

"Good-bye, Aunt Katie dear," Mary cried. She came running down the stairs with her suitcase in her hand. "You've been awfully good to me. Good-bye! I'll be back soon, I guess."

"Mary—Mary, look now; was there

anything serious between you and Richard?" Katie faltered.

"Why, he—— why, I—— well, it was as serious as it could ever be with anybody," Mary said. "There'll never be anybody else for either of us!"

"He meant well by you, didn't he?"  
 "Richard—— Mean well by me? Richard? Why, Aunt Katie, he and I—— he asked me—— why, Aunt Katie, you *know* he meant well!"

There were loud impatient toots from the car before the house. Kennedy got out of the car, came up the path, and pulled at the doorbell.

"Good-bye! Good-bye, Aunt Katie dear!"

"Oh——oh! Good-bye! God love you! Good-bye!"

### III

"**S**AY, what do you want to sit all alone there in the back for?" Kennedy said. He slowed down, and with one hand on the wheel turned in his seat and looked at Mary. "Come on, be sociable!" he said. "Get in here with me."

She shook her head. "I'd rather stay here," she answered.

"Well, then, I'll get in there with you for a while," he said, smiling boldly at her. "We got nothing to hurry for."

It was evening now, and growing dark fast. Kennedy stopped the car, got out of his seat, and climbed in the back and sat down close to Mary. She drew away and looked at him coldly.

"Aw, what's the use of giving me the frozen face?" he said, and he leaned over and gave her hands a little tug. "You ain't like this with Richard."

"Don't touch me!" she said.

"Oh, my!" he mocked her. "Oh, my goodness! I s'pose you think nobody knows about you and Richard? I s'pose you got the idea we all think you're a little plaster saint?"

"I want you to get out of this seat

and go back where you belong," she said, breathing fast.

"Not before I get a kiss," he said.

"Don't touch me!"

"Oh, mercy!" he said in a high falsetto voice. "I'll teach you all right! I could eat you up, you little thing, you!"

He slid one arm around her, roughly pulled her towards him and, with bold shining eyes gleaming at her through the dusk, brought his face close to hers.

"Just one little kiss!" he mocked. "A sweet kiss—like you give Richard!"

With a sudden wrench, and a mighty uplift of her whole body, she tore herself away from him, raised both her hands and dug her nails into his face, viciously, as a small, helpless animal, cornered, might turn on its tormentor. With an oath, he started back, put his hands to his face, and looked with a scowl at the blood on his fingers.

He took out his handkerchief, patted his face, glared at her with the blackest, ugliest scowl she had ever seen on a human face.

"By rights I ought to throw you out of the car bodily," he said. "That's what I ought to do!"

"By rights you ought to be in the front seat driving me to New York," she said, panting.

"I got a damned good mind to put you out right here," he muttered.

"If you do, I'll telephone to Richard's mother!"

He sat there, patting his handkerchief to his cheek. The cat—the spiteful little cat; marking him up like that! If he threw her out, she'd call up, and then that devil of a Miner woman would be right after him. Well, he had the wad of money. Good thing he hadn't turned it over to her! He'd keep it, that's what he'd do. Yes, he'd take her to New York, and leave her there, and then he'd drive off. To Canada, maybe—or California—or Mex-

ico. He put his hand in his pocket and pinched the thick envelope which Mrs. Miner had given him for Mary. There was a lot of money there. He drew down the corners of his mouth in a sneer.

"All right!" he said with a scornful smile. "All right, sister! If that's the way you feel about it, let it go at that."

He got out of the back, climbed into his own seat, started the motor and drove on. Like a fiend, he sent the old car hurtling over the roads, while Mary bounced and bounded about on the back seat, terrified, but knowing well enough the futility of protesting.

Through peaceful little villages where lights shone from windows they tore, and on out upon the smooth, hard state road, glistening in the rays from headlights; through cities, where Kennedy slowed down, only to put on speed again as they reached the outskirts.

At last, New York; people on the sidewalks; street cars, lights, theatres, radios whanging loudly in stores.

Kennedy stopped the car with a jerk at the Biltmore. He did not get out to open the door for her.

"Here's where you get out," he said insolently, turning his head to scowl at her.

People going up and down the wide carpeted steps; automobiles rushing in both directions in the streets; lights everywhere; crowds; New York! Mary's heart beat fast.

A tall, broad man in a gold-braided uniform came forward, opened the car door, reached in for her suitcase, and led the way to the revolving door. A bell-boy stepped forward and took the suitcase from his hand. Dazed and excited, Mary stepped out of the car, and the moment she did so, Kennedy, watching his chance, shot his car out into the stream of traffic and was gone. . . .

Katie Kelly sat in the kitchen in a rocking chair, her apron over her

head, weaving back and forth, bent over, her arms crossed on her waistband.

"I dunno; I dunno where she's gone," she said, her voice coming out doleful and muffled from underneath the apron. "She's gone, that's all I know. . . . No, I dunno when she'll be back. I dunno nothing—nothing at all."

Richard Miner stood, staring down at her with a puzzled face.

"Something queer about this," he said. "You *must* know, Katie!"

And now Katie, goaded beyond endurance, tortured by her conscience, and pulled the opposite way by her dread of being forced out of her home, began to weep aloud.

"I can't tell you nothing—nothing at all" she wailed. "I can't tell you! I can't! Oh, go away and lemme be."

"Well, I'll go away," he said, "but I'll come back. You'd better get a grip on yourself and see if you can't act like a human being."

Richard opened the door, stood a moment on the step, and then walked away towards his car. Slowly, he drove around the block, turned the next corner. He heard someone hail him from the sidewalk, looked up and nodded, smiling perfunctorily. Juliet, standing by her own car, came towards him then, looking at him with warmly smiling eyes, motioning for him to draw up to the curb.

"Hello!" she said.

"Hello yourself!" he answered.

She drew a finger-tip along the edge of the car door. "You look kind of worried, old bean," she said. "Don't blame you, your girl's hopped off with the chauffeur!"

Richard's eyes flared wide in utter astonishment. "What's *that*?" he exclaimed.

"I say, your girl—that pretty girl you've been rushing, the one at Katie Kelly's—has gone off with that good-looking chauffeur; Kennedy, I think, his name is."



"Blah!" Richard said, with a disgusted look. He took out his cigarette case, and pulled one out, but his fingers shook. "That's a lot of pure, unadulterated blah, my dear Julie, and you know it."

"Is it?" she said, and smiled more than ever. "Is it, my dear Dickie? Well, you inquire round and you'll find out. She wasn't any good, anyway."

"That'll do, Juliet!" Richard rapped out. His lips closed in a hard, straight line and his eyes gleamed at her from between narrowed eyelids. "No more of that!" he said.

Juliet put her head on one side, smiled scornfully. "It's those little sweet, pretty ones that get the men every time," she said. "You're smart, Dick, but *she* was too smart for you. Well, she's gone off with Kennedy, and she won't be back."

"It's a lie!" Richard said.

"What a way to speak to a lady!" she said, with a shrug. "Well, go ask your old Katie Kelly, if you don't believe me. Or go find out whether Kennedy's gone or not."

He stared at her. Kennedy! Kennedy?—and Mary? It wasn't possible—after last night. Why, all their life together was decided last night!

Juliet watched him. "Go find out, if you don't believe me," she persisted.

"Well, I will!" he answered; "I *will* go find out."

"Yes, do, Richard," she said. She drew her finger-tip slowly along the edge of the car door again. Suddenly, she looked up, let him see what was in her eyes. "Oh, Richard, Richard my dear, you don't know where your real friends are!" she said.

"I know you're a good friend, Julie," he said perfunctorily, and he gave her fingers a quick little pat.

There was a twisted smile on Julie's face as she watched him swing his car round and drive down the street.

Later on, next week—the week after anyhow—she would ask Richard

to join them on the yacht; he loved the life on the water. They'd sail away—to Maine—or Nova Scotia—or even Iceland, she remembered he'd said once he would like to go there. And he would be glad to get away, too.

But she must be very careful not to irritate him; just leave him alone; see to it that he was comfortable and well cared for. And there on the yacht together—with summer just around the corner—they'd have long pleasant days together; long evenings together, watching the sunsets and the stars. Once more, Juliet would get what she wanted. . . .

Mary had written her name in the hotel register. Stiffly and self-consciously, she walked past the people who sat on the divans along the corridor. She had gone up in the elevator and followed the brisk bellboy down the dim, softly carpeted hall. Now she was alone in her room—a huge room, with two beds, and a large bureau and a small dressing-table, and a bedside table with a telephone.

There was one enormous window, and she went over to it and stared out at the city. Tears rose to her eyes, her throat ached, her eyes smarted and burned. She was lonely. It was night. And she was all alone.

Last night—last night they had been together; they had found a place—like a little secret bower—at the top of Avon mountain—a hidden room whose walls were blossoming trees. And there in the silvery moonlight, in the burgeoning springtime. . . .

She had helped Katie with the dishes; then she had skipped gaily up the stairs to her own little room, where she had brushed her hair till it looked like a shining golden cap that just fitted her head; had changed her shoes for the pretty *suède* pair that she still felt wickedly extravagant over; had slid out of her office dress and into the soft blue *crêpe*, which

made her eyes look even bluer than they really were.

And as she did all these things, she looked out of the window towards the big house which faced in the opposite direction. Richard—Richard Miner! She caught her breath rapturously. He was hers, he told her so! Forever and ever! The gypsy had been right that time she had her fortune told.

"Wealth and fame I see for you!" she had said, holding Mary's hand in her dirty paws and stroking the lines with a little ivory spatula. "A rich husband! A fine house! Many children! You'll be 'appy; but not right off—after—after a lot of other things happen, then you'll be 'appy!"

Well, the other things had happened, hadn't they, Mary thought that spring evening, singing a little song under her breath as she watched for Richard. Her mother, then her father—both gone now; the home gone too; "things" enough had happened, and now she was ready for the happiness the gypsy had promised her.

She saw the long low roadster slide smoothly out of the garage, like a big beetle. It turned, headed down the road through the garden, came to a stop under the window where Mary, her eighteen-year-old heart pounding in her breast, looked out at her lover.

Happy? Anybody'd be happy to have a lover like that, she thought. Katie said all the girls were crazy about him. No wonder!

And then Katie was calling up the stairs to her. Then she was running down; then they were looking at each other, with that curious breath-taking little shock of wonder that seemed always to happen when their eyes met. She couldn't look away; her eyes were locked in his. She couldn't speak; her voice was gone. She could only look and look and look at him, her lover.

Then they were off, sliding almost silently out of the little yard and off down the little back street where for-

eign-looking children played and yelled.

At first they said hardly anything to each other. They drew together, pressed against each other, breathing fast, glowing with the sheer happiness of contact. Sometimes Richard looked down at her, so small and sweet there by his side, and smiled.

"Where'll we go?" he asked.

"Oh, anywhere; I don't care."

"Let's go over the mountain again."

"And let's stop when we get to the top and get out."

"Let's!" . . . .

Sitting there in the dreary hotel room, staring out at the brick walls that rose on every side, Mary thought of last night.

They had driven the car in through the bars of a fence that had fallen down, had left it standing there, and had wandered away, hand in hand, over the soft, new, sweet-smelling grass.

They had found the little place that was like a secret, hidden bower, a hidden room with walls of blossoming trees and a floor that was carpeted with moss and tiny flowers. The moon shone; the air smelled sweet with the unutterable fragrance of new life on every side.

They stood there, hand in hand, looking off down the mountain, where the lights of the city looked like a string of jewels.

"Let's go deeper into the woods," Mary said. "Let's pretend we are lost."

"—and must stay here forever—"

"—together!"

But they had not gone on. They had remained there in that little moonlit secret room.

"I feel your heart beating—beating; it keeps time with mine!" she told him, laughing, as they stood there pressed close against each other.

"My heart—my heart," he said unsteadily. "My heart,—it's beating for you, Mary; for you!"

She looked up at him, her own heart pounding so that she could scarcely breathe.

"Mary, don't you know what's happened to me? I love you! I'll always love you!" he said. "Don't you—love me—too—a little?"

"Not—a—little. All! Every bit of love there is—all for you."

"My darling! My dear, my darling dear!" he said.

He drew her closer and closer, slowly, gazing at her with eyes that shone in the moonlight. He smoothed back the golden hair from her forehead; he brought his hands down tenderly on either side of the little oval face.

"I love you *dearly*, Mary!" he said.

"And I love you!" she answered, simple and sweet and honest.

He kissed her—the first time. Her lips sprang into flame under his, her eyes opened wide and then closed. Her body throbbed and burned with love for him. Her eyes, wild and gleaming with the wonder and glory of young love, opened wide and looked at him.

"My darling, my darling!" he breathed. "This — this — I never thought it would be like this!"

"Like this! Like this! I always *knew* it would be like this!" she laughed; exulting, happy, triumphant.

Overhead the silver moon, underneath the soft new grass and little newly-opened blossoms; all around the wonder and the glory of the earth in springtime; and in their hearts the age-old miracle of love which seems newly invented by every pair of lovers.

And the earth, swinging through space, beating like a great heart, was teeming with lovers, all in pairs, all throbbing to each other, all fulfilling

their destiny of life and love and mating. . . .

A long time they remained there on the springy turf, cheek pressed to cheek, hands clasped, murmuring, sighing.

A little cool breeze sprang up; the moon went under a cloud.

"We must go."

"It's late."

They gazed at each other, awe-struck and diffident before the amazing wonder of the thing that had happened to them.

"You know what we must do now, Mary?" Richard said soberly. "Right away—to-night—before we go home, we must be married!"

Married! Her face grew pale and then rosy red in the dim starlight. Her heart skipped a beat; her breath caught in her throat.

"Right off!" he said firmly. "We mustn't wait; we must go now!"

Her mouth drew down at the corners, she looked at him with big tearful eyes.

"Don't you want to be?" he asked. "Don't you want to be married to me, little Mary-child?"

She nodded, but two big tears gathered in her eyes, rolled down her cheeks.

"It's kind of—frightening," she whispered. "I never knew it would be like this."

"Frightening?" he repeated tenderly. "Don't be frightened, little darling child; I'll always take care of you—always."

Silent, they had driven down the mountain. Their lives were settled. Always, they would be together.

"There's a fellow named Hutchinson that's a minister; went to school with me," Richard said. "We'll get him to marry us." . . .

Hutchinson had smiled a little, shaken his head and glanced quizzically from one to the other. It wasn't quite so simple as all that, he had

told them; you had to have a license. Had they thought of that?

Richard scowled, made an impatient gesture. He had forgotten.

"Well, I never got married before," he said, pretending to be very man-of-the-worldly and blasé about it.

Hutchinson, in his dressing-gown, a little cross at being waked up in the middle of the night, laughed shortly.

"You go get a license, old bean!" he said, drew back and closed the door.

There on the doorstep they faced each other. Five days before they could be married, Hutchinson had said; something about giving notice of your intentions. If anything should happen? People got killed,—every day people were killed suddenly, without warning! If anything should happen! They clutched at each other in sudden panic.

Next door to Hutchinson's little English-looking house was his church,—a beautiful old stone church, all bowered in ivy.

Richard's hand closed firmly on Mary's wrist. "Come!" he said. He drew her swiftly along the path and up the steps of the little portico at the side of the building. In some churches the door was never locked. He turned the handle. The door swung open.

The moon had come out from under a cloud and shone in through the tall stained-glass windows. At the far end of the church the golden cross on the altar shone out through the gloom.

"Come!" he said, and, together, they went softly to stand before it.

He couldn't remember the words. He drew off his ring, the heavy gold signet ring that had been his father's.

"I, Richard, take thee, Mary, to be my wedded wife—till death us do part!" he said. He slid the ring—too big, too loose—upon her third finger, closed her hand over upon it. He was trembling. He leaned down to her and

kissed her, and his lips tasted the saltiness of her tears.

Outside again, speeding towards home, they reacted with the volatile spirits of youth. They laughed, trembled excitedly, chattered furiously, saying the same things over and over again.

"Always—always now!"

"We'll keep it a secret!"

"Twice—we'll be married twice, and nobody will ever know it!"

"We're really married now—to God," she said shyly.

"My darling!" he said tenderly.

"My dear darling!"

"You'll tell your mother now, Richard?"

"Have to!"

"And then—then we will *be* together; not just talk about it!"

Then they were home again, and Katie was waiting. It was daylight and they had been away together all night.

Now night had come again, and Mary was there in that lonely place of towering buildings and windows and windows and windows—and Richard was far away.

#### IV

**K**ATIE KELLY sat in the high-backed old rocker, bowed over, her arms folded across her waist. She weaved her body back and forth, back and forth.

Before her stood Richard—a flaming, panting Richard this time—hands clenched, jaw rigid, brows knitted.

"But what—why—how did she come to go with Kennedy?" His voice sounded rough, hoarse, hot with rage.

No reply came from the shrouded figure in the chair. Back and forth Katie's ponderous shoulders moved. If she spoke, if she said so much as one word, out she'd go from the little house where she'd lived so long.

"Didn't she say anything? Didn't she say anything at all?"

Katie moaned. Could she tell him—could she tell him—with the memory of his mother's cold, dominant face before her, knowing well what it would mean if she spoke? She made sounds of distress under the apron that covered her head, like an animal caught in a trap.

There was silence in the room. Richard's shoulders sagged. His mouth drooped at the corners. Gone with Kennedy—after last night! With Kennedy—as good-for-nothing a waster as there ever was! It did not seem possible.

"Mary!" he murmured. "Oh, Mary, Mary!" He turned round and, walking slowly and heavily, almost like an old man, he went away. And, left alone, Katie broke out into loud wailing cries. . . .

Great cliffs and crags of buildings wherever she looked; thousands of bare unfriendly-looking windows. No one to speak to. And when evening came, a gray haze settled over the city, and the towering buildings blossomed with myriads of twinkling lights.

Mary was lonely. She had nothing but Richard's ring to comfort her. It was too big to wear on her finger. She drew out a pink ribbon from her slip and tied the ring on it and put it round her neck. She smiled a little as she did it. Like the movies! That was the way they always did with secret wedding rings.

She wondered how that other girl—Margaret—was getting on with her love affair. It was nice to think that she would be married; nice, too, to think that Mary herself would have just a little finger in the pie. Of course, she could understand the Miner point of view. Well, anyway, it was better to do as Richard's mother wanted her to do; it would not do at all to antagonize her.

But she hoped it would not be very long before she heard that it was all settled. And Richard would be writing and telephoning; his mother had said so. She sat down and gazed at the telephone on the bedside table, as if she meant to charm it into ringing.

Nothing whatever happened, though, and, after a long time, she went to bed and lay there, slim and straight, eyes wide open, still listening. . . .

Morning. No letter. But there must be a letter soon, for Mrs. Miner had forgotten to give Kennedy the money for the hotel bill. *She* would write, anyhow. And, perhaps, Richard would send a message. Why didn't he telephone? Perhaps he had telephoned while she was out of the room!

After that, she was afraid to leave the room. There she sat, staring listlessly out of the window, or walking restlessly up and down, waiting, listening. The longest day she had ever spent.

When night came, there had been no message of any kind for her. Uneasy and anxious now, she went to bed again and tried to sleep.

Suddenly, the thought went flashing through her mind, Kennedy had had the money for her and had not given it to her! She sat up in bed. Then, she would have to call Mrs. Miner in the morning; for she had only forty-two dollars and the room was eleven dollars a day! . . . Yes, she would have to call up.

She wondered how early she could do it. She would have to wait a reasonable time. But when she told Mrs. Miner she had not enough money to stay away, she would understand. And she had kept her promise not to communicate with Richard. She was puzzled to think how that made it any easier for him, but if his mother wanted her to do it, she would.

Morning came at last. Mary rose and dressed herself, tried to eat

breakfast, fluttered nervously about. Eight o'clock. . . . Half-past eight . . . . Nine. Half-past. She had decided to put in the call at ten. She watched the hour hand crawling, crawling round to ten.

Smiling, she put in the call. It would be something, just to be connected with the house where Richard was. She sat back, waiting. The bell rang out shrilly. Her heart gave a great leap. She snatched the receiver.

"Party you called says they don't wish to talk," the operator's voice droned.

"You must have made a mistake; you called the wrong number! What number did you call?"

"Chestnut, 3912; name of Miner, Springfield."

"Call again. There's some mistake!"

"Aw right."

Another long wait. Then the bell rang. Gasping a little, Mary took up the telephone.

"Hello?" said a crisp, impatient voice.

"Mrs. Miner? I want to speak to Mrs. Miner."

"Speaking!"

"Mrs. Miner, it's Mary Davitt! I haven't—Kennedy didn't give me the money; I haven't got enough to stay here—not even enough to pay for up to today."

There was an instant of silence. Then the cool insolent voice said:

"And why do you ask *me* what to do?"

Mary's mouth dropped open. She caught her breath:

"Why, you—you—you told me to stay here till I heard from you! You told me—you told me, Mrs. Miner!"

She heard a small sound like an amused snort. "What I tell you *now*, my good girl, is to do just exactly what you like!" the cold voice said.

"Shall I come back?"

"Do just exactly as you please!"

"But I don't understand! I've done

just what you told me to! Isn't everything all right? Has anything happened? Richard——"

"Richard sailed last night on the Morgan yacht," Mrs. Miner said. "He has sailed for a long cruise; the Morgan family—his fiancée, Juliet Morgan." The telephone clicked.

"His fiancée! He can't have a fiancée! He's my husband! He's my husband!" Mary heard a queer, rough voice that didn't sound like her voice at all, crying those words into the telephone; but Mrs. Miner had gone.

"Come back! Come back!" Mary cried, shaking the instrument, clicking the hook. "Call them back! Call them back!" she wept.

Richard—with "his fiancée!" How could he have a fiancée when he was married to her?

"They don't wish to talk," the operator's bored voice drawled.

Frantically, again and again, Mary put in a call. Again and again, the bored voice made the same reply. They didn't wish to talk. . . . they didn't wish to talk . . . . they didn't wish to talk.

I'll put in another call from the booth downstairs, she thought. I'll give another name; I'll pretend I'm speaking for someone else.

The butler's voice told her that Mr. Richard Miner was out of town; couldn't say when he'd return. Any message? . . . . Oh, no! he could not give any address. Mr. Richard had gone on a yacht. . . .

Mary walked slowly towards the soft, deeply cushioned divans along the corridor, and sat down, dazed, sick, almost insane from the sudden terrific impact of the news she had heard. People passed constantly. Gay, beautifully dressed people they were, all on the way to meet someone. She was all alone—and she was lost; she was in the midst of a desert . . . . and Richard had gone away to be with his fiancée.

The orchestra was playing in the

dining-room. People were going in to lunch. Then, after a while they were all coming out from lunch, and then the orchestra stopped playing.

Someone sat down on the divan beside her,—a woman, quite stout, with clothes that seemed too voluminous even for an old lady. She sank down with a sort of slump that flung her draperies over Mary's knee.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" she said, and leaned over and carefully pulled her flowing befringed garment away.

Mary nodded. After a while, the old woman hoisted herself up out of the soft seat and waddled away. Still Mary sat there.

What shall I do? What shall I do? What shall I do? she thought, dazedly, painfully, hopelessly.

Leave here, her common sense told her; leave here at once. Eleven dollars a day. She stood up. She'd go at once and give up her room, pay something on her bill, and go home—back to Springfield.

Her little handbag, slung on her wrist, hung open and empty! The small pocketbook that she kept her money in was gone! Frantically, she fumbled among the pillows of the divan; looked on the floor; felt underneath the seat; it might have fallen.

"My purse! My purse is gone!" she said to the clerk at the desk.

He gave her a bored look. "Is it?" he said.

"I was sitting there on that seat; I had it—and now it's gone!"

He had nothing to say; just looked at her, cold, uninterested.

"But you don't understand," she said; "it's all the money I had! I can't pay for my room! I can't get back home! My money's gone!"

"You have the key to your room?" he inquired.

She nodded, took it from her handbag, gave it to him. He put it down out of her reach.

"I guess, you'll find your purse,"

he said. "Until you do, we'll have to hold your belongings."

She gazed at him for a moment, uncomprehending. Then, as she grasped his meaning, she began to tremble.

"But you don't understand! You don't understand!" she cried. "I haven't any money."

"Kindly step aside," he said, bored and polite. "These people behind you have been waiting some time. Step aside!"

Dazed, walking stiffly, as if her feet were made of wood, she stepped aside as he bade her, and found herself being propelled gently towards the revolving door by a man who had stepped up and taken her elbow in a firm grip.

"Why, they're putting me out!" she thought. It seemed like a dream. It couldn't be real!

"No fuss, little lady!" the man said in her ear. "No fuss and it'll be better all around. Just go out quietly."

He put her into a compartment of the door, stepped in behind her and pushed the door around. She was projected out into the street, and the man stood by the door watching while she walked away.

How could a thing like that happen to her—to Mary Davitt? It was all a horrid dream, and soon she'd wake up and laugh over it. . . .

It was a dream, but a very real dream. The sun was setting; soon it would be night. She was in New York, and she had no money; no place to stay—no clothes.

If she could only think,—but something had happened to her head, inside, so that it was like feathers, all flying and fluttering about. You couldn't think, when you had nothing but feathers inside your head.

She was lost—alone. In the midst of a crowd she was all alone. She had no money; no place to go. She could not even go home.

A man spoke to her.

She hurried on, walking fast. She

kept on walking. If you have no place to go, you walk. You have to. The sun set; the lonely gray haze began to settle over the city, and the thousands of lighted windows sprang out, yellow squares against the gloom.

There was something to do in a case like this, if she could only think what it was. There were people to whom you could go if you were in trouble, but who were they? She couldn't think.

Her weary feet began to lag. Her shoulders drooped. Her lips trembled. She stopped, leaning against a doorway, staring at the pavement.

A woman glanced at her, passed on, glanced back, and then turned and came towards her.

"What's the matter, my dear?" she asked kindly.

Mary looked up dully. She saw a tall and handsome woman, beautifully dressed, with a face exquisitely made up. "New York-y" they would have said of the woman in Springfield.

"What seems to be the trouble?" the woman asked again. She glanced quickly around, and then leaned towards the girl. "Never mind telling me," she said; "come along home with me and have some tea, and then you can tell me. You're all in; I can see that."

At the sound of the friendly, kind voice, Mary's eyes filled with tears. To go somewhere and sit down; to tell someone; to have someone—anyone—to talk to!

"Come on," the woman urged, "come on." She took hold of Mary's arm and started her along.

Then from the gloom of the wide hallway behind them a voice spoke—a cool, decided voice that had the same inflections that Richard's voice had.

"Er—I wouldn't do that, Miss Patsy!" the voice said in an indolent drawl.

Miss Patsy started, and behind her

delicately applied rouge the red blood rose in a surge. She straightened up and threw back her head, her nostrils expanding nervously. She said nothing, but the eyes which had seemed to look at Mary so kindly a moment before were hard and glittering, as she turned them upon the man who sauntered out of the doorway and stood facing her.

"You'd better be on your way, Miss Patsy," he stated.

The woman's mouth twitched; her eyes flared angrily; then, with a terrific effort, she gained control of herself. She smiled; she tossed her head disdainfully; she pursed up her lips.

"I'll leave it in *your* hands, then," she said smoothly, and with another toss of her head and a little twisted smile, she was gone, swinging along up the Avenue, her head held high, her handsome legs twinkling in their expensive stockings.

"Now, what——" the man said, turning to Mary. "What in the world's the matter with you, child?"

"Nothing," she said. You didn't appeal to strange men in New York. She wondered why he had interfered. Miss Patsy had looked so kind. Tea. . . . she had spoken of tea.

"But there is!" he insisted. "You look like a kitten that's been drowned or something, and crawled out again. Tell me! Don't be afraid!"

"That woman said she'd help me," Mary said.

"That woman is one of the most notorious women in the city of New York," her companion told her. "That woman has a string of apartments all over the city, with girls in 'em—all kinds of girls! You'd have been one of 'em if you'd gone with her. You know what I mean, don't you?"

Mary nodded, staring wide-eyed. She wrung her hands together. She trembled violently.

"Oh, I want to go home!" she wailed. "I want to go back to Springfield! I want to go home!" She was



crying, weeping aloud, shuddering.

He drew her back into the shelter of the hall. "Don't act like that," he said. He took both her hands in his, held them close. "Look here; you need somebody to help you. I'll see that you get back to Springfield. But you'll have to get a grip on yourself; you don't want to have hysterics in public, do you?"

But by that time she was beyond control, and she struggled away from him. She turned towards the wall, beat both hands furiously upon it; even banged her forehead against it. Cries, shrieks, moans came from her lips. Tears rolled down her face. Her whole body shook in wild hysteria.

He had closed the door with its protecting iron grill work, and they stood alone there in the small hall.

He seized her elbow, shook it, tried to get her attention.

"Stop it! Stop it!" he said. "I told you I'd help you. Stop this crying, will you?"

Still the wild cries and shrieks went on. Suddenly, he lifted his hand and slapped her cheek—once—sharply. Startled, she jumped back, her hand against her face, staring at him like one suddenly awakened.

"I had to do it," he said remorsefully. "Forgive me! It didn't hurt much, did it?"

"Yes, it did!"

"But it was the only way to stop you. Now, come along up to my place, and get your face washed and rest a little while, and then I'll see that you get home all right."

She drew back, shaking her head, gazing at him doubtfully.

He smiled ruefully. "Don't you trust me?" he inquired. "Well, look here, I'll give you the key to my place, and you can go in and rest. Lock yourself in, if you want to, and I'll stay outside." He held out a little key to her.

"I would like to rest just a little

while," she murmured. "And I think I do trust you."

"Come on, then," he said.

He led the way up the narrow private stairway (the elevator entrance to the building was around the corner, and the little secret staircase went no farther than the first floor). He pressed a button and after a moment the door was opened by a Japanese servant; a sober, doll-like little figure of a man in his black suit, his faintly yellow face like the countenance of a wood image.

Mary saw a tiny square foyer; beyond a living-room—a softly lighted, sheltered room, dim, shut in, almost secret.

It was pleasant to be there, in such a place, after the rush and glare of the street. She let herself sink down into a deep, soft chair; relaxed, sighed.

"It is night, isn't it?" she murmured, as if she were surprised. "It was noon—when I left the hotel. I've been walking ever since. Such a lot has happened!"

"You look it," he said. "Just rest now. Bring tea, Moto—hot, and be quick!"

"You wouldn't believe all that's happened to me," Mary said plaintively. "I want to tell you."

"Better have something hot first," he said.

She looked with eager eyes at the silver tray which the Jap set down on a table at her elbow; tea, strong and hot and revivifying; tiny sandwiches. She ate them all.

"You are kind," she said. "Awfully kind."

He smiled. "It's a word not often applied to me. I'm afraid," he said cynically.

But she shook her head. "Kind to me," she insisted.

"Well, you're so little!" he answered. "And you look so—so kind of drowned—all but submerged—sort of going down for the last time."

"I've had awful trouble," she said. "If I could just get home again! If I can only just get back there!"

"You can," he comforted her. "You can be back in Springfield tonight."

"Oh!" she sighed, putting her hands together like a little child. "Is it true? Can I, really? Home—you don't know! Oh, I want to be home again."

He nodded, smiling at her. "There's a train in an hour," he told her. "It won't take fifteen minutes to reach the station; till then we'll just sit here and rest. Maybe you'd like to tell me all about it."

So she told him. Sitting there in his soft, deep chair, she told him her story.

"My father and mother both died," she said, "and I went to the city and took a course at business college. Then I found a place in an office."

She told him of Katie Kelly and her little red brick house, down back of the big Miner house, and of the tiny sloping roof room which Mary had had for her own. She told him of Richard.

"We drove around together every night. Sometimes we got out of the car and sat on the grass. One night we found a kind of fairy place near the top of Avon mountain. We were there a long time. We—we— Oh, we loved each other dearly! It was for all time—for always! It was like floating away—above the world—away, together; nothing else in all the world!"

"Afterwards—we were frightened. Richard said we must be married—at once, so that there wouldn't be objections and delays. We went to a friend of his, a minister. He sort of smiled; he said it couldn't be done all in a minute like that. There had to be a license—five days' wait—and all that. So Richard said we'd be married anyhow."

"We went into the church. We stood before the altar. The gold cross shone

in the moonlight. He put his ring on my finger. We kneeled down there in the church. We asked God to bless us. We were married."

She drew up the heavy signet ring on the pink ribbon from where it lay on her bosom, and showed it to him.

"It's my wedding ring!" she told him, simple and sweet and pitiful as a little child. "It's too big, except for my thumb!"

He sat there, looking at her. If Miss Patsy, who knew him so well, could have seen him at that moment she would have doubted her eyes. His eyes were bright as he looked at Mary, and his mouth had fallen into an expression almost tender.

He got up from his chair and went over to her and took both her hands, very gently, very tenderly.

"Little child!" he said softly. He patted her hands comfortingly. "Little child, you! You've got the most wonderful thing in all the world—love—the ability to love! You'll be happy! I'll help you."

"You will?" said a soft, sneering, drawing voice from the door. "You really think you *will*, my de-ear?"

He swung round, straightened up, scowled. All the kindness, all the tenderness went out of his face. It was a face now to fear; dark, ugly, menacing, "You, Vera?" he said. "You here—again?"

"Yes, again!" she said. "But never any more after this time! This is the last time!" There was a strange wild look about her; blue eyes with pupils that were too big, too black, too gleaming; a small girl, beautiful, beautifully dressed; but wild and fierce and ominous, with her white face and terrible gleaming eyes.

"You think—you think—you can treat *me*—like the others!" she cried. "You think you can do that to—me! Not so, my friend! No, not to *me*!"

"We've had it all out, Vera," he said. "Nothing is gained by repeating these painful scenes. Your pride—

where's your pride, my dear girl?"

"Pride!" she echoed. "Pride! What's pride? What's anything now—to me?"

He scowled, shook his head impatiently. "It's over! It's all over, my dear girl!" he said. "You must not come here again!"

She stood there, looking at him, her right hand at her side, hidden in the folds of her skirt.

"I shall not come again!" she cried. It was a mournful cry—high, sorrowing, hopeless. "Never—any more! Never—never—never!"

The terrible eyes expanded in the small, white face.

"The last time!" she cried, and raised her arm. A small, bright automatic flashed in the light. She fired—and again—and once again.

For a moment, which seemed to stretch out into indefinite time, every one in the room was still, petrified, motionless.

There, upon the floor, lay the man who had befriended Mary, blood oozing slowly from a wound at the base of his throat, so that his white shirt was gradually turning red.

There stood the woman who had killed him—staring, staring, staring; her head thrust out towards him, her mouth fallen apart, her hand still gripping the shining little gun.

There by the door stood the Japanese servant—calm, only slightly interested apparently, surveying the scene.

And Mary—her brain rocking, her heart pounding, her throat throbbing so that she could hardly breathe—sat trembling and gasping, clenching and unclenching her hands.

A moment. An instant. A flash of time. Then the murderess flung from her gloved hands the little weapon that had served its deadly purpose, whirled round and round and round, like a demented creature, with her

hands to her head. Then she darted towards the door and was gone.

"You go, too, miss!" the Jap said politely to Mary. "You better go quick, miss! Pleece be here soon now!" He was holding the door open for her.

She gazed at him. "Where—shall—I—go?" she asked.

He smiled, shrugged his shoulders, shook his head.

"Don't know," he answered. "Better go quick, though! Pleece come now!"

She stared and stared. He took her elbow, shook it a little, moved her gently along towards the door. Like an automaton, she stepped stiffly in the direction in which she was propelled. He pushed her through the open door, started down the stairs, stood grinning his wooden grin as she went stiffly from step to step, moving like a sleep-walker.

She was in the street again. People were passing, bumping into her, knocking her this way and that, as she walked rigidly along in a straight line, as if she were the only one on the sidewalk.

Some one seized her arm. "What's that matter? You asleep?" a voice asked. A face peered into hers, whether a man or a woman she could not tell.

"I want to go home!" she whispered. "I want to go home!"

"Hey, you're sick, kid, I guess! Where is home?"

She shook her head. "On a train," she murmured.

"Oh, a train! You're looking for the railroad station. I guess!"

"Yes—train."

"See that street over there? Go straight down it, and you'll come to the Grand Central."

She nodded, turned in the direction pointed out, and walked off.

The Grand Central was the station. A great high-domed place;

windows where you bought tickets; a big sign, "Information."

Mary went up to a window, looked in at a man who leaned on the counter looking back at her.

"Well?" he said.

"I want to go home," she said, "but I've forgotten the name."

"Aw, quit your joshin'," he said. "What's the answer?"

"I can't remember the name," she said. She gazed at him hopelessly, a little lost girl, all alone in a strange place. "I can't remember it!" she whispered.

"Can't, hey?" he said, eyeing her shrewdly. "Where you been this evening, what?"

"I want to go home!" she repeated, twisting her fingers together. "There's a tower—a tall, white tower; there's a light on top of it at night."

"Might be Hartford," he said. "They got a tower there with a light on the top of it."

"It's a tall, tall tower," she said. "You can see the light on the top for miles and miles—at night; it shines—all night."

"Sure!" he said. "That's the Pilgrims' tower, all right, all right!"

"I want to go back there," she told him.

"All right," he answered. "There's a train in a few minutes." He ran his fingers down the rack behind him, extracted a ticket, flipped it down before her. "Four dollars, twenty cents," he said.

She stood there looking at the little pasteboard slip. "I haven't got any money," she said.

He looked at her for several seconds, steadily. He was used to all kinds of games; he was all through being done. This was just another one—but such a wretched, scared, lost-looking one! Her lips trembled, her eyes, wild and gleaming like a frightened little animal's, shone at him through unshed tears.

"All right, I'll go you!" he snorted. ("Soft slob that I am!" he muttered to himself, impatiently.) "I'll stake you to it. There it is! Take it—take it!" He pushed the ticket towards her. "There's your track over there—number eleven," he said.

The train clattered along over the rails. People came bustling in at the stations, others got off. Sunk down in the corner of the end seat, drawn into a little heap, Mary sat miserably, drawing long, shuddering breaths, clasping and unclasping her cold little hands.

There was a place where there was some one who knew her; and she was going there; there was a place that was home.

Some one had been killed—killed.

The little Jap had told her to go away, quickly. Who was it that had been killed? And why had he told her to go away?—she was not to blame.

Her head felt hot and dizzy. Her thoughts whirled round and round and round—like feathers—like dry, dead leaves in the wind . . . Richard—home—a place where there were faces that she knew; home . . .

The stout, fatherly looking conductor passed and repassed her seat, and each time he looked searchingly at her.

"You sick?" he asked kindly, as he took up her ticket on his last trip through. "You want me to call the Travelers' Aid woman when we get to Hartford?"

"No, I'm all right," she said.

"Twon't be any trouble," he urged. "That's what they're there for."

"No, thank you," she said, and turned away.

There had been an accident on the line, and the train was delayed for hours while the wreck ahead was cleared from the track. Mary sat there in her corner, staring out. The

sky began to grow bright along the horizon. Her head fell forward; she slept from sheer exhaustion.

When she woke, she had forgotten who she was and where she was going; and how she happened to be on a train, and what she was going to do. She had forgotten everything. Blank. Empty. Nothing.

The train stopped. The conductor came to her seat and nodded to her, and obediently—a little lost girl—she climbed down the steps and walked away in the direction the other passengers took.

She saw a park, all green and lovely, rolling like a meadow, and at the highest spot of the beautiful, billowy expanse of lawn she saw a big, white Capitol, with a golden dome.

She gazed at it worriedly. I ought to remember that, she thought. If I could remember just one thing—just one—I believe I could remember it all.

But the glistening white Capitol woke no remembrance within her troubled mind. The sun was shining; everyone hurried by with bright, morning faces; groups of girls went chattering past—girls, all hurrying along—to—to—offices.

Why, yes! She worked in an office! She remembered now!

Relieved, all unconscious of her strange appearance, she joined the procession of girls and hurried along with them.

She followed the group just ahead of her into a building, and crowded into an elevator with them. She got off when the last of them got off, followed along, a trifle uncertainly, as they went down the wide corridor. In a locker room she took off her hat, hung it up, and, not regarding the curious stares directed at her, she passed through a swinging door to a room where there were two desks, sat down at one of them and waited.

Some one came in and looked at her

—a woman, clever, capable, smartly dressed, not young.

"What's the matter?" the woman asked. "Why are you sitting here?"

"I work—here—don't I?" Mary said.

"Here?" Emily Rivers said. "No, you don't work here!"

At the door a group of girls had gathered, inquisitive, giggling, whispering. Mary looked around. She was a little frightened; strange faces everywhere she looked; everything empty—blank—gone.

"Then, where do I work?" she asked piteously.

"Well!" said Emily Rivers. "Well! What's your name?"

"I have forgotten it," Mary whispered. Her eyes, scared, looked into Emily's.

"Forgotten your name!"

Emily Rivers bit her lip thoughtfully. Something was seriously wrong here. The girl was ill—out of her mind—or worse.

"Come out here with me," Emily said, not unkindly, and she took Mary's hand and led her to the coat-room, where there were dozens of girls, hanging up their hats, powdering their noses, chattering, laughing.

"Does anyone here know this girl?" Emily inquired. "She's ill or something. What do they call that trouble?—amnesia—aphasia—some such thing. She's forgotten her name. Does anyone here know her?"

Eager, curious, excited, they crowded round. Forgotten her name! Amnesia? Oh, yes, that thing you read about in the paper; people wandered away, and were found hundred of miles from their home—couldn't remember who they were! Just think, right here in the Pilgrims' office! Couldn't remember her name!

No one knew her. Maybe they'd better call Dr. Acton, the company doctor.

"Well, you're all late now," Emily

reminded them. "You'd all better go along to your places. I'll stay here with her till the doctor comes."

Dr. Acton came in—young, slightly pompous, a big, heavy young man with a large, round face, apparently possessed of the idea that the Pilgrims' Company was pretty lucky to have him for a doctor.

He drew up a chair, seated himself in it with his best professional manner, and gazed at Mary, sitting straight upright on the edge of a chair, her cold hands clasped rigidly in her lap.

Dr. Acton asked her questions, snapping them out at her suddenly, abruptly, as if he thought to surprise her into answering!

"What's your name? . . . Your father's name? . . . Your mother's . . . What's your address? . . . Don't you know what street you live on? . . . What made you think you worked here? . . . What was the name of the man you worked for? . . . Well, if you work here, how much did you get paid? . . . What's your name? Jennie? Nellie? Bertha? Smith? Jones? Williams? . . . Can't you remember any name at all?"

Over and over he snapped out his short, sharp questions, hoping to rouse her to the point of an answer, and succeeding only in reducing her to a state of quivering panic.

"Write your name; write it here! . . . No, don't stop to think; write it—write it!"

Sitting there before him, perched on the edge of the chair, cold, trembling hands clasped in her lap, Mary stared at him, and began to cry as a small, miserable little child cries, mouth drawn down, eyes screwed up, tears rolling down her face, sobbing, sniffing, shuddering.

Dr. Acton stood up briskly. "Case for the hospital," he announced. "Send for the ambulance! Or she can go in a taxi."

"Oh, dear!" said Emily Rivers. She

bent over Mary, patted her hand. ("My, she's cold as ice!") "You—Maybe you'd better go to the hospital for a little while, my dear!" she said, pitying the lost girl with all her heart.

Mary got to her feet, trembling. "No, no!" she said. "I'll go somewhere else, if you don't want me here. Maybe—maybe I can find the place where I—where I belong." She started towards the door, her feet wavering.

"We *can't* let her go out like that," Emily Rivers said.

"Of course not!" Dr. Acton agreed. He took a firm grip of Mary's arm. "See here," he said, "you'll have to go to the hospital. It's the only place for you."

Frightened at the cold face and the harsh, determined voice, Mary shrank away from him. Her eyes went round the room; strange faces everywhere she looked—curious, heartless faces; from one to another her troubled young eyes went. One face—one face only—in that group of people showed any pity. She stood there, held fast by the doctor's firm grip on her arm, but she threw out her hands in a piteous gesture towards that one pitying face.

She jerked herself free from the hard hand on her arm; she ran to Emily Rivers; she caught at her hand and clung to her.

"Don't let them take me to the hospital!" she wailed. "Don't let them! Oh, don't! Let me stay with you—please—please, just till I—till I can remember."

"Of course I will!" Emily Rivers said.

There was a little excited quiver of interest in the group of girls at the door. Cold, calm, capable, efficient, the most important woman in the whole great office, the girls stood a little in awe of Emily Rivers.

And something was happening to Emily Rivers herself. Her heart was

beating fast; her eyes were smarting; her throat ached. But she felt warm and happy! That little lost thing, running to her like that—frightened, ill, lost, alone! Emily Rivers put her arm around the girl. How thin she was—all bones.

"Of course, I will!" she said again, and more than one of the girls gathered at the door felt tears spring to her eyes at the look that came over the tear-stained miserable face of the little lost girl.

## V

AFTERWARDS, Emily Rivers always thought of that summer as the time when she "came alive." The brisk, coldly efficient business woman with not a thought in the world beyond success, became a tender, generous woman, forgetful of self.

"You needed something like this, Emily!" Dr. Jimmie Braden said on one of his visits. "You needed some contact like this to—er—to humanize you, to enable you to see your fellow-men, as you might say! Maybe in time you'll be able to see me; hey, Emily?"

Emily laughed. Jimmie Braden had asked her to marry him once, long ago, when they were both a good deal younger, and when it had looked as if he would spend the rest of his life sitting in a bare little office, waiting for patients who never came.

Emily had refused him. She was intoxicated then with her own amazing success in the business world. She wanted to go on and on and on. She loved money and place and power. Women aspired to high places now; why should not she go on until she herself sat in a high place?

But Dr. Jimmie never married. And in spite of that—or, perhaps, because of it—he was now one of the city's most important (and certainly the most highly paid) spe-

cialists. Dr. James Braden, with a suite of offices that took up a whole floor of a great office building, with three assistants and a corps of nurses, was a very different person from the shabby youngster who had worn a gray alpaca coat in his office, and wondered, despairingly, if no one would ever open the door and walk in with some strange and appalling disease, which he could cure and so become famous.

Dr. James Braden, who seldom made house calls nowadays, came often to Mary, the little lost girl. He shook his head. There was nothing to do but wait.

"A case like this is very interesting," he told Emily, "very interesting."

He spent hours, sitting there in Emily's pleasant living-room, where the fire of little logs crackled and snapped on the hearth. He invented a game with pencil and paper, and the three of them played it together. You took the paper and pencil, quickly, without thinking, and you wrote your name. Thus they came into possession of two names from out of the blank mist of Mary's past.

"Mary," she wrote one day, trembling, looking up eagerly to see if she had pleased this strange man who was so kind to her.

"Good girl!" he said, approvingly, carefully seeming not to make too much of it. "Now, once more. We'll all write—quick—the name of the person we love best!"

They bent their heads, pretending not to watch her. "The one we love best," Dr. Jimmie said. His pencil traced an E.

Bright-eyed, anxious to please him, Mary held out her paper for him to see.

"Richard," she had written.

But further than that she could not go. The mists closed in all about her, blotting out the past.

"How could it be that no one missed

her, a little girl like that?" Emily said. "Nothing in the papers! No news of a lost girl! Somebody *must* have missed her."

How could Emily know that two people missed Mary, thought of her, the one with bitter, heart-broken yearning and the other with a kind of hopeless remorse?

"Mary. Richard." That was all they knew about her.

It was spring when Mary went to live with Emily, and in the autumn Emily bought a little plain gold ring—a wedding ring—for her to wear on the third finger of her left hand.

"She's going to have a baby, isn't she, Jimmie?" Emily asked one day when they were alone together.

"Yes," he answered. "I was going to tell you soon. What do you think you'll do with her then?"

"Why, what is there to do?" Emily said, surprised. "I'll take care of her, of course. What else could I do?"

He stood up smiling, relieved. He had been afraid to hear her answer, afraid of what she would say.

"Emily!" he said, "Emily!" He went towards her, his eyes shining, but she backed away.

"No, Jimmie, no!" she said.

"All right," he said, and turned away. "All right, my girl; I can bide my time."

"Don't think I'm ungrateful, Jimmie," Emily said. "I don't know what I should have done without you."

He nodded. "Well, I've grown very fond of that little lost thing," he said. "And it's very interesting, too; extremely interesting. You know, there's a chance she may remember—when her baby is born; just a bare chance."

Mary sat quietly by the window, looking out. Always she sat like that, so quiet, so little, so—so lost. Emily felt her throat ache as she looked at her.

"Darling, there's something I must tell you!" she said gently. "You won't be frightened?"

But, cautiously as she spoke, she saw overwhelming terror leap into the blue eyes.

"Not—not— You're not going to make me go out from here?" Mary faltered. "I'm afraid—of all those faces!"

"No, no, darling!" Emily said. She took both the cold little hands in hers, patted them. "You—you—you're going to have a baby, Mary darling," she said. "And you mustn't be frightened! We—Dr. Jimmie and I—will take care of you. You mustn't be frightened the least little tiny bit."

"A baby?" Mary said. "All my own?"

"All your own!" Emily said, her eyes burning with tears.

"I'd like that, I think," Mary said.

"And Dr. Jimmie thinks—perhaps—*then*, you'll be able to remember."

"Yes!" Mary answered. Her eyes shone at Emily, seemed to look past her, beyond, perhaps at the future, perhaps at the past. "Yes, I believe that's so, Emily! Sometimes I sit here—sometimes it's all right here in my head—like a closed door; sometimes I almost *do* remember, Emily!"

## VI

RICHARD MINER'S mother looked as smooth and crisp and silky as ever, but not so dominant, not so sure of herself; things had not turned out as she meant to have them. She sat by the window in her own room and gazed out at the winter landscape and shivered a little and drew her shoulders together as she thought of the words Richard had said to her.

"You aren't God, mother," he said cruelly; "you've got to let other human beings have their own lives. You've had yours, you know."



"Richard, I acted for the best!"

"The best for *you*!" he retorted bitterly. "What *you* wanted—what *you* thought best—what *you* wished to have happen."

"Richard—"

"Look at Margaret! Look at what your orders and commands and scolding and nagging have done for her!"

"Oh, Richard, don't!"

Mrs. Miner turned away, covered her eyes for a moment. Margaret—her beautiful, wilful, high-spirited Margaret—married to a chauffeur! Margaret who might have had anybody, married to the chauffeur who took Kennedy's place, a good-looking young fellow who wore his uniform with a swagger, and who drove, when he could, without a cap, so that his thick, wavy brown hair shone in the sunlight.

And Margaret had run off with him, had been married in the rectory, and had gone to housekeeping in an apartment which seemed to Mrs. Miner like a tenement—a little tucked-up place where you could look out of the windows (any one of the windows) and see washing hanging on the lines.

Mrs. Miner groaned and closed her eyes and shook her head.

Margaret—delicate, slender, proud Margaret—married to a chauffeur! Margaret washing dishes in a big, gray enamel dishpan, or down on her knees washing up the floor; but laughing through it all, pretending that she liked it, that it was fun.

Tears burned in Mrs. Miner's eyes, and she winked them away.

And now Richard—Richard was going away to the war; perhaps forever!

"It's no use to argue, mother," he said; "my mind's made up."

"But you'll come back, Richard? A year—two years. The war will be over. You will come back—some time?"

"Never," he said, "never!"

Richard had traced Kennedy by the old Cadillac, had found him at last in a hospital in Cleveland, dying, the car smashed. Kennedy had told him what he knew of Mary. Left her at the Biltmore; that was all. At the Biltmore, all they knew was that she had walked out of the place one day.

After that, search as he might, there was never another trace of her to be found. The city had swallowed her up; she had disappeared completely.

"After the war—South Africa; Australia. I'll settle out there; I'm never coming back," Richard said.

"But, Richard!"

His face was cold and hostile as he turned it towards his mother. He would never forgive her. In the nights he thought of Mary—and the things that could happen to a little girl—all alone and lost in the city. . . .

On a cold, blowy, snowy day in February, they took Mary to the hospital. They had engaged a pleasant, sunny room for her, and she was registered as "Mrs. Mary Richard." She wore the little gold ring that Emily had bought for her, and when the nurses, or the historian of the hospital, inquired about her husband, Emily replied with one word: "Gone!"

It was very pathetic, the hospital people thought; so young, so pretty, and her baby coming. No wonder she lost her memory! . . . They were very kind to Mary.

Dr. Jimmie had carefully explained to her what was going to happen. It was a perfectly natural occurrence, he said, and she was a strong, healthy girl, and had nothing to fear.

"You see, Mary, some terrific thing that we don't know about happened to you—some frightful thing that caused such a shock to your mind that you forgot everything. You may remember when your baby is born," he said.

"I believe I will, Dr. Jimmie," she answered.

"And you're not to be frightened," he said. "I'll stay around near at hand, so, if you want me, you can just say so and they'll let me come in. Dr. Chilton'll take good care of you. You aren't going to be frightened, are you?"

"N-no!" she said, but her chin shook a little and her hands were icy cold as the stretcher came for her and Emily and Dr. Jimmie walked beside her to the fiercely glistening white room where there was a table in the middle of the floor, and against the wall an empty little basket.

They heard her sigh heavily as the door opened to her, and the stretcher rolled smoothly up to the table, and two smiling nurses came forward. Then the door was closed.

White-faced and shivering, Emily waited outside that closed door until Dr. Jimmie took her elbow and led her away, out of hearing of what went on in that shining, white room.

All the afternoon—all the evening. It was a long, long wait.

Once they sent for Dr. Jimmie . . . No, Miss Rivers could not go in; that would be against all the rules. The doctor might go in; the patient seemed to want him . . . No, Miss Rivers positively could not go in.

"It's going to be all right," Dr. Jimmie said when he came back. "There's nothing to worry about."

They went down to the dining-room, tried to eat something, hurried back.

At half-past twelve that door opened, and Dr. Chilton, smiling, red in the face and perspiring, looked out at them.

"Nice boy!" he said. "Everything fine!" Then he shut the door again, and, as he did so, a thin, wailing, acid-sounding cry, like a kitten's, came from within the room.

It was over—and Mary had not remembered. She lay that Sunday morning in the high, narrow, white hospital bed and smiled at Dr. Jimmie and clung to Emily's hand. The baby had been in, had been admired, and taken away again. Outside, the storm roared and swirled past the windows. It had gone on for two days and one night, and showed no sign of abating.

Dr. Jimmie was bitterly disappointed. Mary had not remembered; she never would remember now. He sat down in the corner, unfolded the Sunday paper he had brought in with him, and retired behind its wide-spread sheets. No, she never would remember now.

He turned his paper, folded it inside out, sat there reading.

He heard a queer, excited, breathless sound from Mary. She was sitting up in bed, pointing, trying to speak—pointing at the paper he held. Suddenly, she found her voice.

"That's Richard! That's Richard Miner!" she cried, and her voice was high and clear and lovely, like water running over stones, like robins whistling in the trees in spring. "That picture there—it's Richard Miner! Oh, I want to see him! Oh, I want to see him!"

The room that had been so quiet, so peaceful, just a moment before, was all in a turmoil. Emily was laughing and crying at the same time. The day nurse was shivering in excitement and running this way and that, distractedly.

Dr. Jimmie bent over Mary. "Tell us what you remember, Mary!" he said gently. "Begin at the beginning."

Breathless, with shining eyes and rosy, flushed face, she told them of Katie Kelly and the little red brick house down back of the big Miner house; of Richard; faltering a little, she told of the fairylike place they had found at the top of the moun-

tain; of the attempt to have Hutchinson marry them, and their visit to the little moonlit church where they knelt down before the gold cross that shone out in the dusk, and asked God to bless them.

"I had a ring," she said. "Not this ring; another one! It was tied on a ribbon around my neck!"

"You must have lost it, darling," Emily said.

"Go on, Mary," urged Dr. Jimmie. "What happened next?"

"His mother came." In a voice that sank lower and lower, she told them of Mrs. Miner's insistence that she go away. "She said that Richard wanted me to go, and then, afterwards, it would be all right," she said.

The past unrolled before her eyes, clear now and unblurred, like a picture reel: Kennedy and the ride to New York; her attempt to telephone to Mrs. Miner; her rebuff and the crushing news that Richard had sailed away with his fiancée.

She shuddered violently as she told what happened after that:

"They put me out of the hotel. I couldn't think. I walked around. A woman came up and spoke to me, and I was going home with her to have some tea, when a man interfered and sent her away.

"He was a nice man; he spoke just the way Richard spoke. I liked him. He said that woman had a string of apartment, all over the city, with girls in them. He said I would have been one of those girls.

"He took me up a tiny little stairway to his apartment, and told a Japanese servant to bring tea. He said he would see that I got home. I told him how I came to be there. Then—then, a girl was there in the room! She spoke suddenly from behind us. She had a pistol—killed—him! He fell down. Blood came out of a wound in his throat; his shirt was all red. I got on a train; I came

to Hartford. . . What does it say there in the paper about Richard?" she asked. "Why is his picture in the paper?"

Dr. Jimmie read the words at the top of the two-column spread:

*"Springfield Man to Join the R.A.F."*

"When? When? When?" Mary quavered. Oh, to find him, only to lose him again!

Dr. Jimmie's eyes raced down the column.

"Good God! He's sailing this very day!" he said. "Today!"

Mary wrung her hands. "Oh, Dr. Jimmie! Oh, Dr. Jimmie! . . ."

Outside, the storm continued to swirl and roar past the windows.

## VII

DR. JIMMIE never forgot that day. The storm had ceased when he reached New York. He was driven to the dock, and made his way through piles of snow already heaped high by the shovelers. The gangplank had been taken in; the ship was ready to sail with the turn of the tide.

"Hi there! I've got to come on board!"

A red-faced sailor grinned, shook his head, spat over the side.

Too late; the ship was ready to sail.

"Hi! I tell you I've got to come on board!"

"Richard Miner! Richard Miner! Hi! Is Richard Miner there?"

"He's below!" the sailor shouted. "He says he don't come up for nobody now."

The ship trembled from end to end. Was it moving? It seemed as if it gathered itself together for the effort of the long journey to distant lands. Steam floated in little plumes from the smokestack.

The narrow space between the dock and the ship was wider now.

... Several years, perhaps! That narrow space grew slowly wider. Not to wide, though. Dr. Jimmie measured it with his eye; it could be jumped. If he jumped and fell short—fell in between the ship and the dock—it would be bad.

He slid out of his big fur coat, stepped back, drew a deep breath, took a little run, and made a tremendous effort, sailed through the air and landed on the deck with a thump, beside the grinning sailor.

"You goin' to England with us, hey?" he inquired.

"Like hell!" snarled Dr. Jimmie. "Where is that boss of yours?"

And now Richard appeared at the top of the companionway.

"What's all this? Who are you?" he asked.

"Neyer mind who I am; I want you to come off this boat!"

Richard stared. "You're crazy!" he said.

"Crazy!" Dr. Jimmie was panting in the wildest excitement that had ever possessed him. "Crazy! What kind of a man are you? You'll come off this boat if I have to drag you off, and swim all the way to shore with you!"

Then, suddenly, his frantic rage left him. He realized that the man before him did not even know what it was all about.

"Oh, God, man, don't stand there like a rinny!" he shouted. "You've got to go back! It's Mary—the little girl who disappeared—your wife! She's in Hartford! She's in the hospital! She lost her memory! You've got a son!"

"Mary?" said Richard, uncertainly, doubtfully. "My—Mary?" He thrust out his head, peered at Dr. Jimmie, puzzled, anxious, upset. "A—a son?"

Dr. Jimmie nodded. "Will you tell 'em to stop this damned ship?" he bellowed. "Or shall I?"

Like a man in a dream, Richard spoke down a tube. Far below bells

rang; steam hissed out of a vent. The ship seemed to sigh and settle down beside the dock.

"Why didn't you try to find her? Why didn't you try? Why didn't you make some effort to find her?" Dr. Jimmie roared. It was the question he had been longing to ask for months and months.

"Try?" said Richard. "Try to find her? You ask me why I didn't try to find her?" He drew his hand dazedly across his forehead. "Why, I hunted for her ever since—ever since! I just gave up a few weeks ago. I found Kennedy; I traced him by the car. Kennedy died a month ago in a hospital in Cleveland, smashed up in an accident. He told me what he knew; he left her at the Biltmore. At the Biltmore, all they knew was that she walked out of the place. I never found onc trace—anywhere."

"She's been in hell," Dr. Jimmie said simply. His terrific excitement was all past now; he spoke calmly, as he usually did. "She had no money and they put her out. She wandered around the streets; a man took her in, and was murdered right before her eyes. We think it must have been Shelton, the bridge authority, from what she tells us. Murdered right before her eyes! She lost her memory; she darn near lost her mind! Somebody sent her to Hartford, instead of Springfield. She's got a baby—you've got a son! Are you coming back to Hartford with me?"

Mary, sitting there cold and motionless, little hands folded hard together in her lap, waiting. Emily, anxious, restless, walking up and down, waiting, too. Waiting. Waiting. No word of any kind had come from Dr. Jimmie since he dashed out of the room on his way to find Richard.

Nurses peering in as they passed the door, eager, interested. The superintendent looking in to see if there

was anything to be done. Patients who were able to be up and about, strolling casually past, pretending not to stare in, but unable to control their curiosity.

"We'd better shut that door," Emily said.

"No, no!" Mary protested quickly. The door must be open—for Richard—when he came.

Waiting. The superintendent came in to say he had tried to get news, but all wires were down; trains were all late, or not running at all. No such storm had been known since the year of the big blizzard.

The baby was brought in, fed, taken away again.

Night settled down over the hospital; the place grew quiet. Only here and there by a stairway a dim red light burned, or in the corridor a patch of brightness shone out where a nurse on duty sat at her desk.

No, Mary would not try to sleep! No, she would wait!

Ten o'clock! . . . Eleven! . . . Midnight! . . . Half-past! . . . Nearly one . . . Then the peaceful quiet of the place was broken by hurrying steps. Doors far below were opened and closed. Steps came from the end of the long, long corridor, towards the room where the door stood open.

Emily clasped and unclasped her hands. The night nurse stood up and drew a long, quivering sigh. Mary sat motionless, hardly breathing, her eyes on that open door.

Some one was there. Richard! He was gazing at her . . . he was close beside her . . . he was bending over her . . . touching her, oh, so gently, as if he wondered if she were real! His tears fell upon her face.

"Mary—oh, Mary—little darling child!"

"Richard—your mother—your mother—told me you wanted me to go away."

"Oh, Mary, never—never want you to go away from me. Never—never!"

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## SOMETHING TO PONDER

*By Ruth Logan*

My husband knows just what I squander,  
Whence I come or where I wander;

Still, I simply can't resist  
Doing things to make him ponder.

Yesterday I slipped a stocking,—  
Sheer chiffon of lacy clocking—

In his pocket and stood near,  
Thinking he would find it shocking.

When he thought I had not seen  
Him extract the chiffon sheen,

He thrust it back into his coat!—  
What the dickens does that mean?

# Nightshade

By ELEANOR SPENCE

THE frogs were singing in the marsh. Their thin young shrilling came past the door of the old Cameron house, bringing spring with it—spring which is always wistful, questioning youthfully its own overwhelming mystery.

Spring did not belong in the old Cameron house. Everything in the high solemn rooms spoke of an enduring winter, of a proper and established silence. The curtains were thick and important. The windows were always kept closed. No *gamin* winds were ever allowed to enter; no raw plebeian sun outraged the dyes of the old Turkish carpets. The house held a sort of finished hush, ignoring forever the crude bedlam of a changing world.

Like the Cameron House, Hettie Cameron, the mistress of it, had never grown old. She had merely arrived at a proud, iron-gray wintriness which implied that youth and spring were insolent, outlawed offenses against the ancient decorum of life. Hettie Cameron moved always like the shadow of an accusation. The lift of her hand as she slapped back the shutter was a reproach against a scheme of nature which permitted shrieking pests embedded in mud to betray the bloodless peace of her days.

"Close all the blinds," she said to Julia Swan. "I can't stand that racket."

Julia Swan<sup>\*</sup> was great of girth, frowsy, manifestly inferior. You knew that Hettie Cameron was the mistress and Julia the servant.

"Frogs are starting early this spring," declared Julia. "I told you not to put out dahlias yet; there'll be another freeze."

"Frost doesn't hurt dahlias."



*The frogs were singing in the marsh*

They had the same argument every spring. Sometimes it concerned the pruning of grape-vines, sometimes the removing of the mulch from the rhubarb row, but the theme was always the same—Hettie's fierce disdain of climactic interference with her plans, Julia's canny caution.

"It don't do 'em any good." Julia emphasized her statement by clapping a shutter bluntly. Julia had been thirty years in the house, yet the insidious dignity of it had not chilled her. She was defensively crude, from her flat

shoes to her thin hair streaked with outrageous dyes. "I hate to hear frogs holler like that. They make me think of folks that are dead and gone."

Hettie Cameron froze.

"Lord 'a' mercy," murmured Julia aghast. "I—I meant my own folks, Mis' Cameron."

"Be quiet! And shut the door."

"Yes'm."

Hettie sat herself bolt upright before the fire. She was the last of a proud race, and it was as if all the cold superiority of generations of men born to command and to ignore had found embodiment in her frail old shoulders, her militantly poised head. She had been one of the Brandons, and the Brandons had been a magnificently insolent clan, even more important and aloof than the Camerons.

Hettie crossed her thin hands. "Is Mrs. Brandon Cameron in her room?" she asked.

Julia puckered her wise eyes. "I heard her come down a minute ago."

The door opened softly, and a woman—scarcely more than a girl—stood there. A girl of rich, dark loveliness. With a quick exactness, a trick of dainty precision which marked everything she did, she closed the door, stood poised on the rug.

"I'm going out for a while. It's so pleasant outside. I'll go out—if you don't mind."

Hettie Cameron drew her strong, iron brows down. "Why consult me? You will do as you please anyway."

"You better wrap up," counselled Julia Swan; "the air is damp."

Garnet drew on a bright red sweater. She smiled faintly, a smile which held a strong baffling reserve; it was as if the smile said gently, "I will do what you advise, but I do it because I want to, not because you tell me to." It was this quality in her daughter-in-law which offended Hettie Cameron most, if there could be degrees in the resentment which gnawed the older woman relentlessly.

With the soft closing of the outer door the two women moved like automata released. Julia Swan sprang toward a closet and snatched on a raincoat. Hettie tiptoed quickly down the hall, gaunt, stalking, a shadow of a woman with dead black hair outlining her white face as evenly as though it had been painted on her cheeks and brow. Julia waddled after.

"Keep in the shadow," warned Hettie.

"I smelt a cigar a while ago," whispered Julia gustily.

"Don't let her see you."

"Don't you fret—hush, she's singing!"

"It's the frogs."

"It ain't frogs—you listen."

Julia opened the door cautiously. A clear voice came through the spring dusk like a thread of silver spun by the paling moon.

"It's her," insisted Julia; "she's down by the orchard fence."

"You keep under the plum-trees."

"You go in, Mis' Cameron, before you git cold."

Hettie went back to the fire. But she did not sit down. She began to pace the room. She walked with the swaying, moody stride of a caged animal, and in her strong, desolated face was a prisoned, fighting look, a hard restlessness that cut bitter lines at the corners of her lips and masked her eyes with steely resentment.

In the marsh the frogs sang their piping chorus, shrill with the young eagerness of spring. Hettie Cameron put her hands over her ears. Spring was for her the mad moon, a savage interim of wretchedness aching with fury and baffled loneliness. In the spring she poisoned all her world with anguished and enraged rememberings as some deep-sea creatures poison the water with their wounds; she could not see the whitening of plum-trees like little virgins putting on their confirmation veils; she missed the kindling of green flames in the forests,

the wave of perfume that rose and swept over the orchards, the glad wistfulness of all the world, because her soul festered in a grave that no man knew.

Somewhere, in some cell of the earth, she knew was her son Brandon, hardly less cold and silent in death than when he had gone away from her. Brandon had been a hard, handsome, defiant boy, born to make men's muscles itch and women's hearts to ache, but Hettie had loved the glittering, insolent chill of his nature, so like her own, as she might have loved a sword she had tempered and polished, even though it cut her fingers to the quick.

She had loved this proud son so much, that all that was gentle and good in her went yearning after him, leaving behind only a husk of a woman filled with rankling dregs of memory. And this curdling poison she kept for Garnet Cameron, Brandon's wife.

Always Hettie had hated Garnet. That instinctive, tender grudging, which all mothers know toward the women whom their sons love, had soured in Hettie Cameron's heart to an acid that stung her tongue and embittered even her prayers.

She hated the girl's strong serenity, which was like silver laid over steel. She hated her dark beauty and deft hands, and she built of this hate a prisoning wall, baffling and cruel. She kept Garnet Cameron in the old Cameron house. She would not let her go. True, Garnet had no family and small means; she would not have known where to go; but Hettie made her situation as much like bondage as she could.

"So long as you are Brandon's wife, you shall live in Brandon's house," she said with cunning emphasis. "So long as you are Brandon's wife!"

She walked the room now, a strained curiosity tugging at her and pride pressing in. Then the door shut carefully, and Julia Swan came tip-

toeing across the room, eager, panting as always on the heels of excitement, but a little dashed, a little quenched.

"It wasn't nobody," she announced. "I followed her. She went down the road to Eilene Jackson's. Do you want I should go down there?"

Hettie Cameron smiled drily and licked her lips. "Down to Jackson's."

"I'll go if you say so."

Hettie Cameron laughed aloud. The laugh was rather dreadful to hear. "Down to Eilene Jackson's?"

"You be careful," warned Julia boldly. "Somebody'll think you believe what that little hussy says pretty soon. People will say she's got you scared—her and that old scalawag of a father of hers. She believes it now, Garnet does—I've seen her watching that little, black young-one, turning his face up to the light!"

"Hush!" Hettie's face whitened with sudden fury.

Yet in her dead, black eyes a certain evil triumph shone. Eilene Jackson was the neighborhood disgrace, and it pleased Hettie to think that there might be a grain of truth in what Eilene so doggedly testified, that Brandon Cameron had loved his wife but little and honored her not at all.

"You want me to go down there?" persisted Julia.

"Go to bed," ordered Hettie bluntly, "and keep quiet."

Eilene Jackson was a colorless, little creature, slender and frail, with hands always icy and a habit of cuddling and shivering even in summer. Her eyes were palely blue and her mouth had a wistful and trusting weakness, with lips that were prone to quiver whenever any one spoke kindly to her—which was not often, it is true. Weak little strays like Eilene are not regarded with charity in rural communities, and it was known that Hettie Cameron had denounced Eilene



for a blackmailer and driven her from her door.

"And called me awful names," Eilene was whimpering, as she crouched before the fire on this spring night, with the frogs fluting their motif of yearning and loneliness in the marshes outside around the little house. "I thought I would die in my tracks. How could I know he was going to marry you? He promised—he swore me on an oath that—"

"Yes," said Garnet on the other side of the fire, "he would do that."

"And I lost my place in the mill—and the men looked at me—it was awful. He done you as bad as he done me, though—and she hates the both of us."

Garnet smiled absently. With swift, precise fingers she was sewing buttons on a tiny shoe, sewing them expertly, fastening her thread with a single motion of her white fingers.

"I don't know why you stay there," Eilene went on, "and her acting so ugly. I wouldn't. The Camerons have always been hateful."

A child, bundled up on a low bed, stirred and coughed. Instantly Garnet was beside the bed, lifting him, his small dark head pressed against her soft dress, his little hands gripping her collar as he coughed again and then snuggled to sleep.

Garnet sat down again before the fire. "His feet are cold. Haven't you a little shawl you could warm?"

"I ain't got nothing," sighed Eileen. "I used up everything when he had the diphtheria, and they made me burn 'em."

Without a word Garnet took the sweater she had worn and held it to the blaze. When it was warm, she tucked it around the little blue feet and smiled at the relaxing of his little body to the warmth.

"You'll catch cold goin' home," protested Eilene. "It's right sharp out now."

Garnet shook her head. "It's spring."

"Spring," said Eilene. "It's been two years."

There was a long silence. Then Garnet laid the sleeping child back, tucked him warmly, and without a word left the house. Outside on the path she met old Dan Jackson, Eilene's father. He did her the honor to stand aside as she passed; she had been "treated bad" by the Camerons, like himself.

In the thin, curdled sky a wan wraith of a moon floated. The frogs fiddled tirelessly. And from all the earth came that keen fragrance of things crying out for life. Somewhere overhead a bird whimpered. The love-time of the world was beginning, running like a little fire around the horizon's rim, and though the flicker of it was warm in the scudding sky, and the breath of it drifted like a caress against the cheek, Garnet Cameron walked steadily along the lane as unmoved as a woman upon a medal. Some time she had died—but when she did not know. Not on the day when Brandon, her husband, had driven off to the mills with the money for the pay-roll in the satchel. Not on the day when they found his car in the river below the black bluffs, with the two bullet-holes through the cushion. Not then—long before that. She had been dead so long that nothing hurt any more, not even the exquisite agony of spring.

At the corner where the wild plum-trees grew thick, she stepped from the shadow of the lane that led to Jackson's, into the road where the moonlight lay as heavy as mist. For an instant she stood still. Then a man rose from a boulder heap where the bloom of the trees sifted, and threw away a cigarette.

"Garnet?"

She came quickly through the dry, tangled grass. "Be careful—they followed me, I think."

The man laughed. "The dear ladies are growing interested, are they?" He was tall and dark; his voice held a deep quality, musical, faintly ironic.

Garnet flung back her head quickly, as though something had hurt her. "We live in such a little world. We live and live—and nothing happens. It is terrible, this ingrowing world. I think Julia would be glad to convict me of witchcraft—the trial would be so exciting!"

"You're not specially happy, are you, Garnet?"

"Most of my life I've been unhappy. It is not a new thing. It—doesn't hurt much when you're expecting it."

He sat down again. There was a trace of young insolence in the poise of his head. "You don't have to stay there, Garnet, you know that."

"Yes," she said slowly, "I know."

"Then why—I can't see why. Your life is going, the young years that count, the years we could be happy in. I can't understand you, Garnet."

She smiled. Then she began speaking. It might have been to that little child in Eilene Jackson's house, that dark, little child whom Hettie Cameron hated, so gentle was her voice.

"I loved a man once," she said it like a psalm; "the worst in him went away. The worst in him died. But the good—stayed."

The man caught her look. It went past him, through him, rested on the thin yellow beam that came through the window of the Jackson house. His face bittered in the eerie light.

"Oh, Garnet!"

"I'm sorry," her tone was still mothering. "I'm sorry—but I can't change things."

He rose. "Garnet, you know how I care. You know I could take you out of this, away from unhappiness. There's Mexico. Garnet, you'd love it—old towns, old bells ringing, a wind from the hills. I'd like to hear you laugh again, Garnet—once."

Her eyes came up levelly. "You could live in Mexico?"

He did not look at her. His tone grew sullen. "Yes—I could live in Mexico."

She drew away. "Some one is coming. It's Dan Jackson."

Like a bit of moonlight drifting between the white boughs she vanished through the plum-trees. When old Dan Jackson came clumping along the road five minutes later, there was no one to be seen in the wild plum thicket.

In her wide, cold room with the large walnut bed and the stiff lace curtains, the little clutter of girlish trifles on the old black dresser the only really human touch in it, Garnet Cameron stood for a long time looking into the eyes of a pictured face in a silver frame—the proud, dark eyes of Brandon Cameron.

The faint, cruel line of his lower lip had been relentlessly caught by the camera, the evasion in his eyes. Garnet knew that look, and daily she turned the knowledge like a sword in her breast. Brandon had been a liar. His eyes lied to women, lied and mocked. She gave him back his straight, proud arrogance, tossing her dark head. Then suddenly she wavered, flung the picture on the bed, threw her arms over it, crumbling down on the rich carpet.

"Brandon! Brandon! Oh, I want you back—I want you back!"

Morning found Julia Swan important with news. "There was a car stood down to the forks last night—a good while, I reckon, by the looks of the oil in the dirt. I'll bet Eilene Jackson's having men hanging 'round again."

Hettie Cameron was serving grapefruit. "Julia—hush!" she said. "What were you doing down the road at this time of the morning?"

Julia halted, gave her mistress an amazed look. "Why—why—" she gulped and swallowed. "I went down

to put a letter in the mail-box," she said.

"Well, don't repeat gossip. And don't discuss that girl at my table."

Garnet said nothing. That was what maddened Hettie Cameron most, the gift the girl had for silence. It was like a silver shell keeping her in. No barbed bitterness seemed to penetrate it; no amount of nagging wore it away. Behind it Garnet kept her own counsel, lighted her wan smile which was too bitterly wise for her years, and hence took on in her mother-in-law's eyes the quality of impertinence.

"The Jackson young one's sick again," went on Julia. "I seen Doctor Miller's car standing by the gate. I guess Eilene feeds him coffee and cornbread; that's what the Jackson's raised all their young ones on."

Garnet left the table quietly and put on her light coat. Eileen had let the baby lie uncovered again most likely; the night had been chilly for all the gold-beaded beauty of the morning. She ran up to her room for a bottle of cough syrup. Little, thin hands tucked in her neck! She must keep him safe.

But Eilene was not in the Jackson house. Old Dan was clumsily ministering to the child, who cried and fretted.

"Eilene had to go away," he explained. "He acts kind of feverish. The doctor went past, and I had him stop. He says it ain't nothing but a bad cold. Don't he look powerful puny to you?"

Garnet had taken the boy to the fire where she cuddled him, unbuttoning his cold, sodden garments. "He's so frail," she said.

"All my young ones was red," declared old Dan helplessly. There was a wistful appeal about him, the awkward wretchedness of an old man, bewildered and troubled. "His vittles don't suit him or something."

Garnet toasted the boy's small feet, so tiny and thin, against the glow of

the fire. "Eilene ought not to leave him," he said.

"She had to go of an errant—last night," mumbled old Dan.

"Last night?" What made her heart give that quick, hurting click? "She went last night?"

The old man's eyes evaded. "She had to go of an errant."

But Garnet knew miserably that Dan Jackson lied. The old man, the little boy, herself—something bound them together in a strange bond of defensive loneliness. Without was spring, a fire kindled, a glad new wilderness set free, but in that little room smelling of stale clothing and soot and grease and tobacco, three of them huddled before a little fire, and Garnet saw cruelly clear. Pitiably, those three; the old man, the little boy, and herself.

Eilene came in an hour. Her eyes were bright. Her cheeks glowed. She was talkative, high-strung, loud, defensive. She laughed a great deal. Garnet Cameron saw that she wore a cheap silk dress torn out under the arms and a hat with cherries that matched her reddened mouth. She had fastened a string of gold beads around her throat. All the wistfulness was gone out of her eyes, all the quivering weakness. She had a look of insolent bloom, an impatience, a trick of tossing her head.

"I met the doctor down the road, and he said the kid was sick." She slid three gaudy rings from her fingers, undoing her dress which had every other fastener missing. "I knew dad would go after you if he got bad. Kids sure do keep you tied down; seems like they're more trouble than they're worth, sometimes."

She came close, bent over her baby absently. Garnet felt suddenly cold and sick. Eilene's hair smelled of tobacco. She had the buoyant, secret excitement of a woman who had been kissed, and she was annoyed at this

sick brat who had snatched her back to tiresome earth.

Tobacco smoke in her hair. The hot red of sly kisses on her cheap, little face, and under it all a sort of triumph, an arrogance, and for the three of them huddled by the fire—the pitiful old man, the pale woman, and the child, — tolerance mixed with a patient scorn.

Garnet walked home numbly, the bloom of the plum-trees drifting unseen over her head. In her upper room Hettie Cameron was making her bed; she did this always with a ceremonial air as one might spread a sheet for a queen, as one might lay a pall for the dead. She paused in shaking out a blanket, took the black silk dust-cap from her hair, and smoothed her gown severely.

"I would like to speak with you, Garnet."

Garnet was suddenly sorry for this old woman who bolstered with pomps and bitter pride the empty shell of her years. She saw that her mother-in-law had dyed her hair again; the bluish stain lay on the dry skin of the parting like blurred ink. She was hoping—hoping yet. Two years and yet hope was not dead; two years and yet Hattie Cameron fought for her youth, hoping still that Brandon might come back. The robbers who, so she believed, had attacked him, might merely have stunned him. He might be wandering in dazed amnesia—some day he might rouse, remember. They had never found the body.

She assumed a judicial attitude. "I called you in to tell you that I know that you are seeing men—at night," she said coldly. "I merely wanted to remind you that you are Brandon Cameron's wife."

Garnet did not flinch. A little quiver like a pain ran over her; her throat tensed; her head went up. "I have not forgotten that I am Brandon Cameron's wife."

Hettie turned back to her bed. Elab-

orately she shook out the blanket, as one might spread a robe for a queen. Her limbs were thin and dried; the blood in them was pale. Soon she would die. Garnet looked at her pityingly.

It was late when old Dan Jackson knocked at the back door.

"He wants you," declared Julia Swan, stalking into the room where Garnet patiently darned a tablecloth.

"I'll speak to him," announced Hettie sternly.

But Garnet was up like a flame between the older woman and the door. "Oh, no—no—I'll go!"

She flashed away, leaving the two women breathless with indignation.

"I have never—in my life——!" began Hettie, outraged.

Julia, scenting scandal, was tiptoeing heavily through the hall. "He's all out of breath," she whispered excitedly, "the dirty old scalawag! He said it was Brandon's wife he wanted—nobody but Brandon's wife."

"Hurry, Julia—see what he means by such impertinence."

But old Dan Jackson, with Garnet hurrying him on, was puffing down the lane. "Don't talk here—she mustn't know."

In the plum thicket he sank down on the boulders. He was an old man, stricken, pitiful, awkward with wretchedness.

"He came back!"

"I know," said Garnet softly.

"You knowed it? You seen him?"

"Yes, I knew it."

Mexico—old bells, old hills, with a wind from the mountain top. Laughter and happiness. Yes, she knew.

"I didn't see him," droned the old man, his head in his hands, "but I knew when she came in. I knew when I seen her looking like she did two years ago. And now—she's gone!"

Gone! Eilene was gone. She had known, of course. She had known it would be like that. Tobacco in her hair, a wild gladness in her eyes—

Garnet had known that Eilene would be gone. What made such a foolish clamor in her heart, a small and pitiful triumph? "He wanted me first! He wanted me first!"

"Look here, now." Dan Jackson lifted a scowling face. "There's something wrong. I got that much out of her; I got that much out of her with a strap. They're after him for something."

"It was the money," said Garnet. "There was the pay-roll—and thirty thousand dollars to pay off a note. There were other people interested—the Camerons don't own the mills now, you know; it's a corporation. Some people think that there was never an accident. Some people know—besides you and me."

"Well, we can stop his smart career—you and me! We can put him where he won't harm anybody again."

She stood under the white plumb-trees like a strong sword launched coldly by the moon. "We can't," she said. "We can't—can we?"

He looked toward the old Cameron house where a sulky beam of light showed. "The old woman's a hard customer. She ain't never done no good to nobody."

"All his life he will be hiding—hiding and hurrying on. Can anything be worse than that?"

"He's done you worse than anybody," insisted the old man. "There's the young one, too—something's got to be done with him. Ain't none of the rest of my girls will take him—none of 'em."

"She would hate you—Eilene would. You can't do it. You know you can't."

He slumped forward. "I reckon I can't," he sighed.

Garnet Cameron laid Eilene Jackson's son upon her own bed. From the doorway Julia's amazed eyes stared.

"Good granny, ain't he thin? And

black! I don't believe I ever see such a young one so black!"

A shadow loomed behind her. Hettie Cameron came in. "You are not going to keep that child!"

Julia eagerly interposed. "Eilene's run off—with a man. He's right fine-looking, ain't he—for a Jackson? He's got a sort of proud look about the nose. You going to keep him, Garnet?"

"Yes, I'm going to keep him."

"In my house?" Hettie's amazement crackled in her voice.

Julia laid her hand upon the arm of her mistress. Her little piggish eyes were wide with the light of a new understanding. "Mis' Cameron—Mis' Cameron—you let her be! You listen to me and let her be."

"That girl's child—in my house—the Cameron house?"

"You let her be!"

Almost Julia dragged the older woman away. But Garnet did not heed or see. She was rubbing the child's feet. The baby opened his dark eyes, puckered his black brows, and frowned. Then he chuckled, jerking his toes away. Garnet swept him close, hugged him till he grunted, hugged him till her throat ached and her eyes misted, as mother-throats ache and mother-eyes grow dim. Then she flung a proud, challenging look at the picture in the silver frame.

"I have kept the best, Brandon," she said.

It was later that a hesitant knock upon the door made the baby blink. Hettie Cameron stood there in her cold Paisley dressing-gown, her black hair dead against her proud face.

"I came to say that I object to having this child in the house," she said grimly. "I suppose you understand this perfectly. But if you persist in defying me—there is a cradle in the attic. It belonged to my son. Julia can bring it down."

Garnet looked up. "Yes, mother," she said, softly.

# Masquerade

By WILSON BENNETT

**I**T was hard to realize that Alex, at one time, had been an innocent babe at his mother's knee. People said he was born sophisticated. They often speculated as to how he must have looked in his baby wisdom. Yet, they couldn't visualize him without that tiny waxed mustache of his and those devilishly intriguing eyes.

Just as it was hard to think of Josie without her dainty wisp of frock, her gauze stockings, her dimpled knees, her russet, ripply hair-do and

her wide naughty dark eyes fringed with lashes separated with mascaro.

To the world—Alec was *the* Alex of Montross, Ewing & Montross, Importers; a man of affairs, a man of wealth—a man who looked as though he had been poured into dinner clothes; a man who strolled into the office at ten, a little bleary-eyed, and strolled out again at four with his golf clubs. A successful bachelor of thirty-three.

To the world—Josie was a modern,



"I've been trying to hold my job"

flip, sporty little devil who knew everything there was to know outside of books. Just an office decoration who managed in some mysterious manner to hold a rather important job.

Both Alex and Josie laughed a lot; both of them took life as it came; both of them were wise—most of all, to each other; or, at least, thought so. They were both stamped with the world's label. Yet what did the world really know of the man who smiled behind that tiny waxed moustache and the girl who had dimpled knees?

The real man and the real girl were as completely disguised, even from themselves, as though they had worn masks.

Josie both amused and attracted Alex. Her youth attracted him; the notebook she carried amused him. It looked like a prop—that is, until she took some dictation from him. It was then that he discovered her to be quite the most efficient stenographer the firm had ever employed.

His elder brother—the other Montross of the firm—had engaged her, it developed. She was at her desk when Alex returned from that trip to South America, and she had flashed him a bewitching smile as she inquired politely what she could do for him.

He had crossed glances with her and said, "That depends!" and had gone into his private office, conscious of her surprised gaze on his back.

Presently he had rung for her and she had come in and they had laughed about her not knowing who he was. And she had answered the phone for him, informing him demurely that Miss Craig would like to speak to him. She had waited patiently while he said to Miss Craig:

"Oh, hello, Gloria! How are you, darling? Yes—just this minute walked in. All right. I'll be out around five. I can hardly wait, sweetheart."

And they had both laughed again—before he cleared his throat and

plunged into the stack of mail waiting to be answered.

For three or four days, although their eyes misbehaved, their words were businesslike and to the point. Yet each knew quite well what the other was thinking, just as they knew that those thoughts would eventually reach the surface.

Alex engineered their first sparring encounter. He lingered, on the following Saturday afternoon, until the other members of the firm had gone and only he and Josie were left high up in the tower of the building near the end of Broadway. Going to the door of his office he looked out and raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Why—you still here, Miss Hagen? Don't they give you a minute to yourself?"

Josie looked up from the papers on her tidy desk. He knew that his surprise didn't deceive her in the least. He hadn't intended particularly that it should. It had merely seemed the least complicated way to begin. Of course, she knew perfectly well that he had been stalling along—knowing she was out there at her desk. But, equally of course, she didn't say so. She pretended innocence.

"Why—I'm just about to go," she said.

"Go—where?" he asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Oh—to meet the boy friend."

"Engaged?"

"Nope. Free as the wind."

"Live with your mother?"

"Nope. My sister."

He regarded her a moment in silence, then: "You look tired. Would you care for a drink—or don't you drink?"

"Upon occasion."

"Well, this is an occasion," he smiled down at her. "I'll expect you—in a moment," and went back into his office.

He hadn't long to wait. She came in almost immediately. She had pow-

dered her nose and put an extra layer of rouge on her already flaming lips.

"Sit down," he invited. "You're my company now—not my stenographer." He pressed a button on his desk and a panel slid out revealing a miniature bar. "What will you have? Scotch, rye—cognac?"

"Scotch, I guess," she chose.

He poured two drinks and handed her one of them. "Here's to our friendship," he toasted.

"Seconded," she laughed. And although he hurried to the cooler for a chaser, she scorned one—in spite of watery eyes.

He came back and sat on the edge of the desk and looked down at her. Her eyes were sparkling. Her scarlet dress left little to the imagination—and what little he could imagine sent a gleam of desire into his glance.

"You know you're as cute as the dickens, don't you?" he asked.

"So they say," she answered audaciously.

"I wish you'd come to dinner with me some time, will you?"

"I think it'd be grand," she replied.

"Soon?"

"Uh-huh."

"Next week—shall we say?"

"All right."

"Another drink?"

"No, thanks. One's my limit in the middle of the afternoon." She rose languidly, "Well—guess I'd better be moving. Can't keep the boy friend waiting." She made him a funny little courtesy. "I enjoyed my visit tremendously, kind sir."

"Will you come again some time?"

"If I'm invited. So long." She stretched out her right hand and gave the fingers of his left a friendly squeeze, then went out of his office, back to her desk. And when Alex followed her, after another drink, he found that she had cleared up her papers and had gone.

He returned to his office, picked up

his hat, cane and gloves, smoothed his hair and his moustache in front of the mirror and went down to the limousine where Gloria waited.

"You're awfully late," she complained, pouting.

"Don't land on me for attending to business," he protested. "It happens infrequently enough."

"We're expected at four," she said.

"We'll be there," he answered—and, absently, as the car started, drew her into his arms and kissed her. He was thinking of Josie's lips—perhaps that was why he was more fervid than usual. Gloria was mildly surprised—but unsuspecting. After all, she had put on an especially becoming green ensemble.

Alex thought of Josie frequently during the week-end he spent at a house party in Gloria's company. Josie, he thought, wasn't going to be difficult. He was glad. He hated girls who were difficult. They took all the zest out of the game.

The very first thing he did when he reached the office on Monday morning was to call Josie in.

"You're company again—for a moment," he said, remarking, for the hundredth time, what a little beauty she was. "Put down your notebook."

"Well, I can only stay a minute—as a company, sir," she bantered. "I'm in great demand this morning—as a steno."

"What about tonight?" he asked.

She drew her brows together in a frown. "Well—what about it?"

"Dinner!"

"Oh! Why—I'm awfully sorry, but I have a date."

He was annoyed. "But I mentioned—"

"How could I possibly imagine you'd make it tonight?"

"Well—tomorrow?"

"Let's see. I had something— Oh, yes! No, I couldn't possibly make it tomorrow."

"Very well," he said stiffly. He hat-



ed girls who were so popular. "Take a letter to Jones & Farwell."

Her manner changed instantly. Her gaze became impersonally inquiring as she waited, her pencil poised.

Instead of beginning his letter, Alex said impatiently: "If it isn't too much trouble—you might name a day then—this week."

She tapped the pencil against the pad. "Do you mind, Mr. Montross, if I let you know later in the week? I mean you aren't angry because I can't say for sure now?"

She looked up at him appealingly. She seemed very worried and child-like. He suddenly laughed. After all a prize was worth waiting for. He mustn't rush her, that was against all ethics. Oh, yes, there was a code in this game they played—a very definite one. To appear to be stalking Josie would be breaking one of those rules. She must meet him half-way. Otherwise it would not be a sporting proposition.

So he laughed good naturedly and said: "I'd wait for you forever, Josie. And now, Miss Hagen—we'll go on with that letter, shall we?"

"Yes, sir," she answered.

Alex didn't broach the subject of dinner all week. Neither did she. At last on Friday, after a particularly strenuous midnight studio party which he hadn't entirely recovered from he demanded of her with imperious anger:

"Look here! What's the matter with you? You're not—playing hide and seek with me, are you?"

She turned, her hand on the doorknob—she had been about to go out—and opened her eyes, startled.

"Why, Mr. Montross, what do you mean?" she asked.

He came close to her, and in spite of the steaming bath and the cold shower and the toilet water, he still smelled strongly of smoke and liquor.

"Are you coming to dinner with me—or aren't you?" he asked, his lips,

under the moustache, jutting out unpleasantly.

Josie's eyes were not naughty, nor were they sparkling now—but hard.

"Suppose I don't care to accept your invitation?" she queried. "What happens then?"

"You've never intended to go with me? You've been stalling—is that what you mean?"

"I've been trying to hold my job as long as possible," she answered.

"You mean, you thought I'd fire you if you didn't say yes?"

"Oh, no! But it would have been annoying—having you pester me—and I'd have had to leave."

"Well, you're a cool little brat, aren't you?"

"Nope, just wise! I've been working for five years."

"I see."

"I've never held a job for longer than five weeks."

"Fired?"

"I've quit."

"What's the matter? Are you hard to please?" He was openly sneering now. But that didn't seem to surprise her either.

She shrugged. "Perhaps."

"What's wrong with me?" He was nettled, of course. That a chit of a girl should dare to turn up her pug nose at a Montross.

"Nothing's wrong with you," she confessed, "but I don't want you."

He threw back his head and laughed. "For unadulterated conceit, I believe you take the palm."

"I don't think so," she disagreed, and her hand slid off the doorknob. "Oh, Mr. Montross," she exclaimed suddenly, "what's the use beating about the bush? I don't blame you for trying to make me. That's a man's privilege—but it's mine to turn you down, isn't it? Why should there be any hard feelings?"

She was close to him—so close that her dainty femininity made him dizzy, faint. He forgot that he was Mon-

tross of Montross, Ewing & Montross; he forgot that Josie was a little stenographer in his employ; he only knew that she was a woman and he a man—and he reached out and drew her into his arms, crushing her against him, tilting back her head to put his lips upon the passionate red of her own.

She didn't resist. It was as though she realized the futility of resistance. She relaxed in his arms and gave herself to the abandonment of his kiss. And in the second, after he released her, and they stood staring at one another, he caught just a glimpse of the girl behind the mask of rouge and provocative coolness. The girl who was perfectly willing to be agreeable, who was quite accustomed to the attitude she inspired in men, but a little sad about it, a little disillusioned; and she was trying awfully hard to cling to something—a peculiar faith, a peculiar weary code of her own.

And, for her part, perhaps she, too, was seeing the real Alex Montross as few people saw him—when his mask had slipped. His sophistication was gone. In its place stood an exceedingly weary, satiated person who still hadn't quite grown up. A person who wanted so to believe in something and dared not.

And then, abruptly, tears darkening her eyes and working havoc with her mascara, she turned quickly toward the door and her hand was on the knob.

"No—wait!"

His husky voice arrested her hand in its motion of turning that knob and the lock clicked back into place. But she did not turn, and he was forced to move to a position in front of her.

"You can't go yet," he said pleadingly.

Her sleek russet head was lowered—for the first time since he had met her. She could not seem to flaunt her bravery now. He had made her bow her head to fate.

"I'm quitting!" she said chokingly.

"You can't! Josie—I love you!"

"What does that matter?" she asked, for, being very wise, she didn't believe what she had seen behind that mask.

"Don't you—care at all?" he cried hoarsely. "Can you go out of that door and never see me again?"

Her head came up then—her lips trembling. "What good would it do, if I *did* care?" she demanded. "I know what you want from me—I know what all men want. But I haven't that to give! I never have and I never will!"

"Josie!" he said throatily. "I don't want—that from you. I thought I did—why should I pretend? But I've fooled myself. I want you to marry me, Josie."

Her eyes dilated as the import of his words struck home. She was pale.

"You don't know what you're saying!"

"Yes, I do!"

"Alex," she said, quietly—oh, but she was a doubting Thomas!—"is it because I'm a new toy? Because if it is—"

"It isn't! Don't you know it isn't?"

He took her hand and pulled her across the room very gently and lifted her up to the desk, her silken legs dangling, her dimpled knees in plain view. Then he imprisoned her with a hand resting on the desk on either side of her, and looked, wistfully, up into her eyes:

"Josie," he said, "I don't know what the hell has happened to me. The brutal, rotten passion you raised in me—has turned to purest gold. It's all mixed up now with wanting to take care of you, wanting to give you the moon, wanting to—to worship you, Josie!"

The mask was completely gone now, and, for Josie, it had gone forever. The sincere wonder, the beauty, the exalted love, shown out from his heart. There was no mistaking it now. He loved her!

She couldn't seem to find her voice—that slightly flippant, airy voice, and after he had covered her hands with his own, he continued very softly:

"But, Josie, in spite of wanting you more than I've ever wanted anything in my life; in spite of not caring what happens if I can't have you—I want you to be sure you love me. Do you, Josie?"

It was a straightforward plea—a plea that couldn't help using the alchemy of its love even though it strove so hard to be fair. And then he saw the whole girl behind the mask of little Josie Hagen—the whole beautiful, tearful glory of her.

"I've—I've been yours ever since you came into the office, a week ago last Monday!" she cried. "I didn't want to love you—but I couldn't help it!"

Her arms were around his neck then and she was clinging to him—feeling his kisses on her eyelids, her throat, her lips.

"Will you come to dinner with me tonight, Miss Hagen?" he asked joyously.

"Let me think—" she began, mimicking herself, but she was ignominiously swept off her feet by a young hyena who wouldn't, by this time, have been recognized as the immaculate Alex Montross of Mon-

tross, Ewing & Montross. His tie was askew, his hair rumpled and never had his moustache given such a poor account of itself. Yet he was totally unconscious of these imperfections, the moment to him was divine.

"Listen!" he importuned. "Is there any reason why we can't slip over to Jersey right after dinner? Is there?"

"Oh, my goodness!" Josie exclaimed—and the roses in her cheeks did not come from a rouge box. "None at all!"

"Whoopee!" shouted Mr. Montross, and was only saved by the ringing of the telephone. He at once came to attention, mustering, as best he could, a terrific dignity.

"Oh, yes," he said solemnly into the mouthpiece. "Ask him to wait."

Josie had obtained aid from her vanity and in spite of trembling fingers had succeeded in making a pretty fair job of it. She was again Miss Hagen, steno.

Before leaving the office, she was treated to a stolen kiss, a wink and a whispered—"Tonight, sweetheart!"

And then she had seated herself quite demurely behind her desk.

When Alex appeared, a moment later, to greet his visitor, he was the Alex the world knew. Sophisticated, debonair—smilingly urbane. Only his eyes when they met Josie's for a fleeting instant gave him away!



# The Far Horizon

By ELIZABETH AIRLIE

CARLTON DREW walked down the blinding white sand of the beach to the motor boat waiting at the small pier. Manned by brown native boys, it would bear him to the port city on the largest island of the group, on one of his infrequent trips to this one point of communication with the outside world. There he would get the news of the war.

Drew was the only white man on his island. With him were natives from Porta Isle that he had brought over when he set up on the smaller island, three years before. The university, by whose research department he had been sent out, had built his house and laboratory and the group of huts for the natives. The island, otherwise, was uninhabited.

When the small staff of engineers detailed to construct his dwelling and laboratory—particularly the laboratory—had departed, Drew was alone!—and that was what he wanted. He had trained Gan, his head man, and Gan, in turn, had trained his brothers to perform the duties about the island, which consisted in caring for Drew's quarters and running his boat.

Drew walked down the beach in the unhurried way of the tropics. His pith helmet and suit of white linen set off his height and his slim-waisted well-knit body; and he had an air of distinction that was arresting. Before his self-imposed exile Carlton Drew had been a well-known figure. His work at the university in that western city back in the States had earned for him a fair degree of fame.

Success in his work, independent means and his engagement to Lucille Martin had seemed to point a shining way to the future. He had felt himself particularly fortunate and life very good. . . . Then Lucille Martin had walked out of her father's home an hour before the time set for their wedding and had married the man Carlton had considered his best friend and had expected to act as his best man.

Embittered, Carlton had promptly cut all ties. The opening in the research department of his university promised welcome release from the pity of his friends, and so he had come to this island in the far South Seas. Only once had he touched hands with the past. In the port city he had found a friend of the old days, in from a trading steamer. From this friend he had learned that Lucille and her husband lived with the Martins in the old home on the elmshaded Drive. There was a child, a little boy whom everybody adored, the idolized pet of the family.

This had served to make Drew more bitter. Lucille's action had incurred only temporary disfavor with her parents, apparently. She had been taken back into their good graces, and with her husband and child, still held the centre of the stage. Which was what he might have expected. Lucille was lovely, imperious, an only child; Jackson was as good a match as Drew, if not better, he told himself. Her parents had recognized that. They had taken him into their hearts while Drew, cheated and wronged, was for-

gotten away here on the edge of the world. The thing which had broken his life had been but an episode in theirs.

His brilliant career had ended. True, his discoveries on the island brought him some claim to fame, and many times, unknown to him, his name was blazed across America, even into that home on the Drive. He knew nothing of it all, save the formal news from the university, and sometimes months-old newspapers reached him. But he had discouraged having papers sent out. He wanted to be alone, undisturbed, with thought only for his work. Work and solitude and forgetfulness.

For three years he had lived on this island, with only the native boys for companions. He made no trips save to Porta Isle, and then only when necessary. Repeated invitations to come to the university for conferences, to lecture on his work, to take a rest, had been refused. He wished to stay where he was, to perform his tasks and let his reports suffice. The work would take him two or three more years, maybe longer. Time enough then to consider any journey back to the States. . . .

The sea was brilliant in the sun, a clear shining blue-green tipped with silver. There was a breeze from the point where the water joined the sky on the north. It stirred restlessly, as though bringing a call from the lands beyond that distant point. But no answering call woke in Drew's heart.

He stepped into the motor boat which bore away from the pier and cut its quick course through the water. Drew would be glad when the trip was over. He dreaded it, dreaded anything that broke the solitude he craved. But there had been a cable from the university, which must be answered, and his reports must be sent off. . . .

In an odorous café on the waterfront, where the heat of the tropics was heavy and oppressive, a girl was

singing. She stood on a platform beside a piano. A dark-skinned youth, undeniably handsome in a heavy lidded, over-red lipped way, was evoking music, so purely beautiful that it was startling; his long slender fingers



*Cara*

seemed almost effortless in their movement.

Groups of men in the white canvas suits of the tropics, sat at tables ringed by many wet glasses. Half-naked brown natives stirred the air lazily with big feathery fans. The café, uninviting at best, was well-known throughout the South Seas and on into that land which touches the tropics, experimentingly and tarnishingly. It was the only place of the kind on the whole group of islands.

The girl who sang was slender and young, goldenly lovely. Her face, regular of feature and fine of skin and coloring, was that of an American. A

mass of thick, soft brown hair, with high tones of gold where the light touched it, clouded her face with soft little curls. Her eyes, her most striking feature, were big and velvety dark, and filled with a shrinking wonder at the wretchedness of life as she had found it. She shrank, too, from the look in the dark-skinned youth's fiery, heavy-lidded eyes when they rested upon her.

Her singing voice was clear and thrillingly sweet, with a catch that was like a sob behind its purity of tone. Her hearers, driftwood of life, recognized it as unusual, even though it was wasted upon them. It needed training and a proper setting that it might bring joy to thousands instead of being poured out for these wanderers and wasters who neither could nor would appreciate it.

For three years, since that time when she had come into port with her father, she had sang in this café, the *Café de Madre*. Her father had drifted here to die from a worn-out and wasted heart, after wandering for years through the islands of the South Seas, dragging the girl with him.

They lived in a room back of the café, which the owner, in return for Cara's singing, let them have. The girl and her voice brought people to the tropical café. Of a surety she sang well. It meant business, so the owner shrugged, and let them stay.

Cara had never known her mother; she had died when Cara was born, but her baby had inherited not only her name but her beauty. The fair-haired older Cara had married beneath her station and had lived a wretched life with a strange and nomadic husband. She had whispered many a prayer before she breathed her last in a South African jungle, that the baby, whose life had cost her own, might know a better lot than had fallen to her.

Cara listened eagerly to stories of her mother, when her father waxed garrulous and turned his talk into the

past. She always sought knowledge of her dead mother that would bring her nearer, closer. She shed tears of loneliness and longing; whispered confidences and even prayers to that tender presence beyond the skies, which she felt would understand, even if powerless to help.

Life in this place was very wretched. It had not been so bad until Arturo, the dark-skinned youth who was the son of the owner, had come home from that South American city where he had been sent to school. Cara was little more than a child then. With Arturo had come Zita, so that at first he had paid no attention to the golden-brown haired little girl, who hid from sight when she was not singing.

Zita was a voluptuous beauty of the type which only the tropics produce. She had had many loves before Arturo. She had lived openly with Arturo in Rio Janeiro and he had brought her with him to *Porta Isle* when he came home.

Zita was hotly beautiful in a full-blown, sensuous way. . . . Her strange greenish eyes, with their long and intensely black lashes, looked out eerily from her olive-tinted face on which she wore a heavy make-up, coloring the high cheeks and full curving lips. The eyes slanted and were sometimes narrowed and sometimes blazingly wide. Her hair was black as a raven's wing, glinting purple, and it made a sleek frame for her arresting face.

Zita's body was poured into the mold of the oldest form of beauty, voluptuous breasts outlined beneath the thin silks she affected, flowing limbs with something fluid in their movement, round soft arms always bare, slender ankles in sheer silken hose, or as often as not bare. She wore a great deal of jewelry; on her fingers with their too-red tips, her arms loaded always with jangling bracelets, about the curve of her throat, in her

ears, even on bands about the black beauty of her head.

Zita lived a life of complete indulgence and indulgence, timed to her own pleasure. She lolled in the garden of the café all day, a cigarette in a long holder always between her fingers; at night she sat with Arturo and his father. She was cat or beast as the occasion warranted, claws concealed in deceiving silk. Demanding service as all lazy persons do, she had first tried to make use of Cara as a servant. But the girl's father, with an up-flaring of old and long-lost authority, had stopped that. And Cara, withdrawn and cold, ignored Zita.

Of late two things had happened: Zita had tired of Arturo and had fastened her fickle fancy on Drew, the strange white man who lived alone on that other island but who came sometimes to Porta Isle and of necessity to the café. And Arturo had suddenly developed eyes for Cara.

Drew had repulsed Zita. When he realized that the mistress of the café owner's son was actually making advances to him he was furious, and had stayed away from the place. Zita, in the stillness of her own room, had ground her teeth and vowed to bend him, somehow to her will.

Then she had seen Arturo's preference for Cara. To her own amazement she saw that Cara had grown up. The thin child's body had filled out. Cara was, in short, a lovely girl just stepping over the border into womanhood. A pale girl, it is true, lacking in fire, with no knowledge of life in her eyes, no sense of her own power. Not caring enough for Arturo to be jealous, Zita had craftily hit on a plan of benefit to herself.

"Me, I will make a bargain with you, Arturo," she said to him one night. Not even mattering that it followed upon the passionate embraces that punctuated their nights together.

"You take your pale child. Myself,

I will have that Drew man." Arturo had agreed.

This left Zita free to her own devices, her plans for trapping Carlton Drew; and it left Arturo free to devote himself to Cara, without fear of a scene from Zita.

And Cara had come to fear Arturo. He sometimes put his hand on her shoulder, and she shuddered at his touch. It was as if some fire within him scorched her. She had caught Zita's mocking eyes, and had been more afraid. . . .

Her song finished, Cara stepped down from the platform and quickly made her way out of the café. She wanted to be by herself, away from his eyes. But he followed her.

"Why run away, Cara *mia*?" he asked, with his lurking smile. He seemed to play with her helplessness, as a cat with a mouse. "Does it not occur to you that I might want to come too?"

She faced him, her breathing quickened, looking very splendid in her young beauty.

"Please leave me alone. I want to think."

He only smiled, his smoldering black eyes, with something cruel in their depths, fixed on her face. Their cruelty flashed like a red flame when they rested on the sweet curve of her young mouth and the tenderness of her throat. This girl would be very sweet to possess. Innocent—he wanted the sensate pleasure of waking her. He bent toward her.

"What are you going to think about?" His voice, low and subtle, seemed to be trying to direct her thoughts into a channel of his own.

She shrank back from him. He fascinated her, even while he filled her with loathing.

"I'm going to try to remember—" with sudden bitterness—"a time when I was not here, in this dreadful place, on this horrible island. A time

when I was with people who were good to me, before my father brought me here. I wish—" she went on passionately—"I could remember my mother. She would have looked after me if she had lived, never let me come here. Then—" she said with burning scorn—"I would never have known you!"

Fury gleamed in his eyes at her words. But this was not the way to win her, by letting his rage overcome him, so he quelled it, and, with Latin ease, changed his mood. He laughed, a low laugh that stung her cheeks with red.

"But I'm good to you," he told her caressingly. "I always see that you have your way. Don't you think it is time you showed me some gratitude? I've been waiting so long, *Cara mia*, for you to see that. You mustn't try me too far. Don't make me wait too long!" He was bending closer and his flashing black eyes held her frightened ones, although she tried to turn them away. With a sudden lithe movement he caught her in his arms. "Little beauty!" he muttered, his hot breath on her cheek.

She struggled frantically with a strength born of sick terror, but he held her, and his lips were crushed first to her soft white neck and then very hotly to her young mouth—the first ravaging kiss that had ever been placed there

It scorched and seared her, sickened her. When he released her, panting with terror and humiliation, she fell back. He laughed unpleasantly.

"Don't like it, *to*? Well, you will. You're going to have plenty of time to learn to like it. For—" his face changing suddenly from smiling mockery to a meaning which struck chill to her heart—"you're *mine*! Do you understand?"

She stared back at him in beating terror, unable to speak, then turned and fled.

That night as she sang she kept her eyes away from Arturo. She knew, from her encounter with him, that matters had gone too far for safety. And there was no way that she could escape from him. Her father could not help. He lay night and day on the bed in the dark back room, and she had the sickening thought that perhaps he would not help if he could. He had never behaved toward her with any tenderness, as if she were his child, had never seemed interested in what happened to her.

Arturo, his lean sensitive fingers wandering over the keys to the melody she sang, watched her with half-closed eyes. There was in his gaze a smoldering, triumphant quality. It seemed to tell her, more and more, that she was caught, imprisoned. She felt like a bird struggling against the charm of a snake, the sickening, loathsome charm of a creeping serpent coming nearer.

After her song she went hurriedly out of the café and toward her father's room. In her mind was the suddenly formed determination to tell him, to beg him somehow to help her.

A cold sense of stillness smote her as she opened the door. On the bed her father lay very quiet. In sudden fright she went to his side and touched the thin hand lying outside the cover. It was cold. His eyes were sunken and closed. His face ashen. The long abused heart had stopped at last.

She dropped to the floor beside the bed, very still. Her father was dead. She was alone! For a while this thought left her cold and numb. Then, as the realization of her utter helplessness made itself felt, she burst into sudden weeping and stumbled to her feet.

Through her storm of tears she saw the dark significant face of Arturo in the doorway. With her father gone, she was in his power.



## H

EVEN as he entered the Café de Madre, the only place in the port city where anything of lunch and a drink that was at all cool could be found, Carlton Drew remembered Zita and her unwelcome advances. He should not have gone. But perhaps she would not be there. She had been with that beast of a blackeyed boy so long, perhaps she had gone to some other by this time.

He had answered the university's cable, and mailed his reports, had received some other communications, heard the news of the war, and laid in supplies. Then he had found his return to his own island delayed. Gan had been hurt—just how was something of a mystery—and must wait to be treated before the port doctor would allow him to be moved. But there was no question of leaving the poor fellow to the indifferent care he would receive there. Gan had served him well, and Drew preferred to take him back and see that he was looked after until he recovered. In case of need, he could send for the port doctor. Drew chafed at the delay, but there was nothing to do until Gan was in shape to be put aboard the launch.

In search of a place to rest out of the burning sun, intensified by the glare-heated streets, as much as anything else, Carlton had turned his steps toward the Café de Madre. It was at least a bit cooler, and not so glaringly sun bright. Lifting his pith helmet from his head, Drew sat down at one of the stained bare tables. His white linen suit, cleaner and more freshly pressed than any other there, struck a distinct note in the squalor about him.

So thought Zita, seeing him enter as she passed through the passage back of the café. Her strange eyes narrowed and her greedy lips curled avidly. On swift light feet, with cat-

like grace, she ran to her own room; there to pile rouge higher on her cheeks, thicker on her lips to dash a few drops of the brightening liquid in her great almond-shaped eyes, to spray herself with heavy scent, to slip into another scant silken garment, vivid red and revealing, to cram more glittering rings on her fingers and clinking bracelets on her arms.

Thus it was that a few moments later, first aware of her presence by the heavy, and to him disgusting, French perfume. Drew looked up to see her standing beside his table. His face set in cold frowning lines.

"But it is good to see my friend *le Americaine* once more, not?" Zita drawled in her purring husky voice. "You have stayed away long, too long. Me, I have missed you!" Without waiting for an invitation, Zita slipped into a chair beside his own. "I will have the so cool drink, too," she murmured, and lifted a hand in signal to the native waiter.

Drew was furious. He cursed inwardly that he had let himself in for this. He looked straight into her eyes, lifted in open allure to his.

"Pardon me, but I do not wish your company," he said coldly.

A flicker stirred in the depths of those deep eyes, but the smile on the curled red lips did not change. Zita would not acknowledge his rebuff.

"Ah, but your chivalry, my friend *le Americaine*," she purred, "it will not permit you to send Zita away."

"You are quite wrong," he told her in a deadly tone. "Either you leave this table or I do!" He set down his glass and leaned back in his chair, waiting for the effect of his words.

Furious color surged into Zita's face, under its load of rouge. "Pig!" she all but spat the word at him. "A lady is pleasant to you, and you are insulting!"

Drew's cold gaze was steady. He despised this woman of a hundred ports, ports of a hundred loves.

"You understand me, Madame," and the term was further insult. He would not call her Mademoiselle, the courtesy title for young unmarried girls. "Will you go away, or must I?"

Zita rose. She stood beside his chair, looking down at him, forcing her lips to smile that others in the room might not guess her humiliation. But her voice was venom.

"I leave, my friend *le Americaine*, but you have not seen the last of Zita!"

Then she left, swaying on her high red heels, with deliberately revealed insolent grace, and disappeared through the curtain that veiled the passage in the rear.

Drew addressed himself to his lunch, meaning to leave the place as quickly as possible. Then it was that he saw Cara, standing beside the piano. She had just come out and taken her place. It was a minute before he realized that here was the child of that other American, grown up. He had not seen her for some time.

It was the second day after her father's death. The pitiful funeral services, with the white priest of the port officiating over there. Arturo, with some unexpected respect for her situation and feelings, had left her alone these two days; but today she must sing. Again she experienced that fear he aroused in her from the way he looked at her.

Drew, returned to his lunch, became conscious of her voice through his preoccupation. He had heard her sing before, but had not realized that she had a voice out of the ordinary. Then he had felt only a vague surprise at the presence of a young white girl in such a place. He had wondered, idly, why a girl, and especially an American girl with some apparent claim to breeding, should be in this God-forsaken hole — it was bad enough for a man! Then he heard something of her father's history and

had dismissed the matter from his mind.

Now, listening as she sang, and having noted that she had grown up, he was disturbed in spite of himself at the possibility of Zita's influence. It could not be good for a young girl. He thought irritably that some one ought to take the girl away. He had not heard of her father's death.

Cara, singing, while Arturo played, saw Drew across the room. She knew who he was. Arturo and his father had discussed him. He lived on the smallest and most remote of the islands. No one knew why he chose this out of the way place, nor why he lived always to himself. She wished she knew him, that she might ask him what to do. She felt hideously alone, so frightened that she was almost ill. Arturo's eyes playing over her left her cold with fear and burning with hatred.

At the end of her song she sat down at one of the little tables, free for a little while, until her next song. Arturo remained at the piano, his fingers wandering into broken bits of melody, thrilling with the youth's peculiar and intensely fiery talent. His taste for music had been developed at the school in Rio. It was the one beautiful thing about him. Cara had one time thought that he could not be all bad, with that gift for exquisite music. But sometimes he wove into it, as he was doing now, the same creeping charm that fascinated and scared her. Feeling trapped, she looked desperately around at the faces of all in the room. There must be somewhere a chance for her to escape from this place, and from Arturo. She felt a frantic haste to find it.

Her eyes went again to Drew's face. It was kind, she decided, although rather stern and sad. He wasn't very friendly, seemed aloof. He must have had a great deal of trouble, some time in his life, to make him look like that.

His eyes were clear and blue, in contrast with Arturo's smoldering black ones. She felt she could trust them, even though they were cold.

Drew finally became conscious of the girl's watching; as he unwillingly met her look he fancied her eyes held an appeal. He began to be sure of it. What would it be next? If the girl were in trouble she ought to be helped. But he did not want to get into anything. He looked away, determined to ignore it, and decided to get through with his lunch and leave at once.

He did not even listen when the girl sang again. But when she finished and sat down once more, he found himself looking into her eyes. This time they flashed a message to him which left no room for doubt. She looked at the dark-skinned youth at the piano with an expression of fear, then back to Drew with undeniable appeal.

Just as Drew began to be startled into attention, the dark youth rose from the piano and approached the girl at the table and a look of helplessness came into her face. Drew saw, but in spite of the natural chivalry that prompted him to go to her assistance, he was glad of the interruption. He need not wait now to find out what she meant. He had no desire for contact with her as one of the sex Lucille Martin had made him forever distrust. He rose and left the café.

Some hours later he was under way. Gan lay in the bottom of the boat, as comfortable as they could make him with rough cushions. Gan's brown helper had assumed command. He had secured on Porta Isle an extra boy, a youth apparently as brown as he, but surprisingly slight, who worked silently a flop-brimmed canvas head-covering low over his face.

Drew leaned back in weariness. He was glad this trip was over. He would

be left in peace for a while, on his own island once more.

Odd he could not banish the picture of that girl in the Café de Madre from his mind. The insistent feeling that he should have helped her, should, at least, have found out what was wrong, should have answered the appeal in her eyes, came to him. For she had certainly appealed to him,—and he had ignored it! Now he was bothered by it. What was her trouble? How was the dark youth who played the piano connected with it? What was his name? Some outlandish name, such as these people down here had. Arturo—that was it. Been away from Porta Isle to school, Drew knew somehow. The memory of the fellow's disturbing melody came back to him. He could play.

But the girl. She was an American, apparently. All the more reason he should have answered her. Whatever she might be doing there, the fact alone that she was of his country should have caused him to heed whatever appeal she had made to him. But it was too late now. He tried to close his mind to any thought of her and was unsuccessful.

When he stepped out of the boat on the beach of his own island, the moon had risen. It hung in the sky, a great ball of silver, bathing the island in a light softer than sunshine, but almost as bright. It made a vivid stretch of the sand at his feet, and deep soft shadows of his bungalow among the trees.

Gan, with the assistance of his brown brother, was hobbling up the beach to his own quarters. The strange brown boy still stood beside the boat. Drew turned to him with some surprise. Why didn't he follow the others?

The boy's hat had fallen off. A mass of cloudy soft hair hung about her shoulders. Through the roughly applied brown stain on her face showed clear white skin. It was the

girl who sang in the Café de Madre!

"Please!" She held out her hands in utter appeal, to ward off his anger. "I had to come. I was afraid to stay at the café an hour longer. It—it was Arturo! I couldn't get away from him. My father died two days ago—I was all alone! There wasn't any other way but to come with you. Don't—don't send me back!"

She sank to the sand, sobs shaking her. Drew looked down at her for a long moment. Then he stooped and touched her shoulder gently.

"I won't send you back. Don't cry! I'll find some other way to help you. You're safe now. I won't send you back!"

The sobs stilled. She rose and let him lead her to the bungalow among the shadows.

When Cara's disappearance was discovered, Arturo was mad with frustrated fury.

"Where has she gone?" he demanded of his father and Zita, "and how could she go? The steamer was in yesterday, but she had no money. They would not take her without. How could she go?"

"Of that you cannot be sure." Zita had drawled. "She is perhaps sly, that child. There was, maybe, some money her father had hidden away. No? Had you thought of that?"

"That is a possibility, yes," Arturo had admitted, pacing like a bulky tiger. "Yes, he may have had, in some of those boxes he guarded so well."

None of Cara's clothes were gone, they saw. But she might have found no opportunity to slip any of them away.

Arturo, his hot Latin blood on fire at the loss of something he desired so greatly, conceived a plan. In his yacht, that white expensive plaything he also had brought from Rio—almost as expensive as Zita had been—he would cut across to the next port but one which the steamer would

make. If Cara were on the ship, he would find some way to bring her back. If she had been on the steamer, the captain would know, and if she had disembarked at the first port, that also would be known. He could return there to look for her. The steamer had the start. He must race to the second stop. But his yacht was swift.

Zita saw him leave, hoping shamelessly that he would find Cara. The girl needed, so the outcast woman decided, what would prove a lesson. There was nothing of softness in Zita's nature, no latent womanhood. She cared nothing for what might happen to Cara. She had her own frustrated feelings to consider. There was the matter of Drew.

If Cara were not found, Arturo would, perhaps, repent of his bargain with her. So she blew a kiss to the success of his search, hiding her smoldering thoughts behind her narrowed green eyes.

For the first time since she had drifted with her father into this strange part of the world, Cara felt free to enjoy the beauty of these southern islands. The island on which she found herself now was especially lovely; the bright plumaged birds that made it their home; the gorgeous flowers that bloom so richly colored and so heavily scented in the tropics; the deep velvety nights when there was no moon, or the shining silver radiance when there was; the spilled glory of the sunsets.

For the first time, too, she was free to enjoy the pulsing glowing life that flowed through her being, to know how glorious it was to be young and to blossom into radiant beauty. There was no pall of terror over her now. Arturo could not find her. She was beyond his power. It gave her a wonderful relief to know that. She found life deliciously sweet here, away from him—and with Drew!

She would always be glad that it was Drew she found in her time of peril, that she had dared to slip away in his boat and throw herself on his kindness. For he had been kind, wonderfully kind. She had thought him so cold and stern, as he sat there in the café, and from the stories she had heard of him. But she was glad now that she had trusted his eyes.

When Drew's first sympathy had passed, he was sternly angry, not so much at Cara as at whatever disturbing providence had brought this situation about. But Cara's story had melted that feeling to pity, that and the fact that she was an American girl. He could not send her back to Porta Isle, and the next steamer to touch the port city was weeks away. Even then, he would not know where to send her. She had no relatives to whom she could go—she had had no contact with any family of either her mother or father, knew of no one. And he had none nor any friends upon whom he might make this strange demand.

Life on any of the other islands was impossible. Even could he establish her there, there would always be danger from the beast of an Arturo. His own work must go on, those experiments he conducted all over the island, concentrating, at last, in the little laboratory, but the question of what must be done with Cara wove itself into his mind. So one day slipped into another while he pondered the problem, until two weeks had vanished into the tropic past.

He resented Cara's intrusion into his privacy, that privacy so dearly bought, very keenly. That resentment was aggravated by the fact that she belonged to a sex Lucille Martin had made him distrust and despise. At times, he vented this feeling in sharp words to Cara, words so sharp that she ran from him sobbing, and he was forced, to his intense disgust, to follow and coax her back to quieted

calm. She could not be blamed for the predicament, yet there was no reason, he knew angrily, why he should be forced to have her a burden on his hands, disrupting the solitary existence he had created for himself."

Her presence caused him great inconvenience. The arrangement of his bungalow was primitive. He had anticipated no other occupant than himself when it was built. A room just off his sleeping-room served him as dressing-room, and these, with the kitchen, dining- and living-room, comprised his entire quarters, with no doors to separate any of the rooms. He had been compelled to give Cara the dressing-room.

It was disturbing to say the least, to have a lovely young girl sharing the intimacy of his house and sleeping in the room next to his own. Too, her presence broke into his personal freedom. He could no longer don his cool linen pyjamas, the loose comfortable garment men in the tropics soon learn to like, and sit about on hot nights in slippers and a cloud of smoke.

Cara, whose fear and hatred of Arturo had made her timid and shrinking from contact, was astonishingly free from constraint with Drew. She slipped naturally and gratefully into life in the bungalow, and her relief from the burden of fear had the effect of releasing her naturally bright spirits. She was intensely thankful to Drew, and tried to show it. She performed little services for him, to his discomfort and dismay, and he found that one word from him to check such actions on her part would cloud her bright face and make him feel like a brute.

Awareness of Cara in his house was becoming increasingly disturbing. Drew never knew when he returned from some trip about the island, or came back of an afternoon from the laboratory, just where he might find her, or how. Once she was

in his bath, a sunken place in his bedroom floor, filled daily with fresh water from a spring, splashing about like a happy child in its delightful coolness. She cried out at his entry, but not before he had caught a glimpse of the alabaster-like body in the clear water. Another time she lay asleep upon his bed, clad in one of his linen robes, because she found it cooler. And each time he had had to fight the feeling that rose in him at her sheer beauty and unconscious allure.

Once he found himself wondering why he fought. How many men in his position would? Then, because he was angry with himself, he chided her, and she burst into tears. Upon which he found himself forced to comfort her again, and that disturbed him too. So that he set his mind sternly to figuring out what disposition he might make of her. One thing was clear. He must send her away from the island as soon as another steamer would make port. . . .

Back on Porta Isle, Arturo had returned—and alone. His search for Cara had been fruitless. Zita heard his angry explanations to his father. Cara had not boarded the steamer. Where the devil, then, had she gone? Listening, Zita reached a swift decision. Cara was really gone, that was a surety. Arturo, then, would turn back to her!

Her sharp white teeth gritted. She wanted nothing so little as that. And then, suddenly, a light burned itself in her eyes. There was one way—but she must be quick to act on it.

Stealthily, to be sure no one saw, Zita slipped into her room, snatched up a gaudy purse which had caught her eyes once in Rio, and for which Arturo had paid, cast a quick glance within to be sure there were coins enough, and made her way, still unseen, from the café.

To the native owner of the small swift launch she presently found she

gave directions. And, with gleaming eyes, settled back in the boat as it sped out across the water.

### III

IN the heat of mid-afternoon Drew sat on the porch of his bungalow, sipping the nearest approach to a cool drink that Gan could make for him. The intensely hot season was well under way. Drew had learned better than to work more than the half day permitted in the tropics. So he had left the laboratory, to wait until the cooler hours following upon the dawn.

The white missy, Gan had told him, was swimming on the other side of the island.

Drew felt that he had decided the problem of Cara. He would send her to the States. He could afford to pay for her care, he figured, even though she had no one nor did he to whom she could go. He would instruct his attorney to arrange things for her.

With the decision had come a certain amount of relaxation. The next steamer would reach Porta Isle shortly. On the day of its arrival, he would take Cara over and book her passage to New York, placing her in the captain's care. Then, and he was grim about this, he would be able to work in peace.

The sound of a motor reached his ears. It startled him, for no boats came to these waters. He looked up to see a boat beaching. A vivid swaying figure stepped out of it. Drew sprang to his feet, rage rising within him. Zita! She had dared to come to his island.

He saw her crossing the sands. Damn the woman! Was there no way of making her understand that he wanted nothing to do with her? Utterly lost to all decency, if she had ever had any, she was determined to cast herself at him. His lips curled

with the disgust she always evoked in him, feelings in which there was no room for any courtesy.

He advanced to the steps and stood there as she approached, very tall and stern and forbidding.

Zita summoned all her resources. Seeing him standing there, her sensuous sway became more pronounced. She had donned the scant scarlet silk, meaning to employ all her allure, display all her charms, in which she had an immense faith. Had she not seen their spell work many times before? Only this man had remained cool,—but she was resolved that he should not be cool long.

Before she could bring her eyes and her lips into play, and the slow drawling music of her voice, however, Drew cut into her approach sternly:

"What do you mean by coming here?" he demanded. Zita saw that it was not going to be easy. But she kept the smile on her red voluptuous lips.

"But, my friend *le Americaine*, there should be more pleasant welcome when a lady travel the long distance to honor the man. Me, I have come to visit with you."

"But you are not wanted here," he told her brutally. "Go back to your boat and return at once where you belong." She smiled insolently.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," her mocking eyes lifted to his, and her head thrown back provocatively. "Not so soon, when I make the long trip to see Mr. Carlton Drew, who secretes himself on this island. I am weary of water and sun. I shall sit with my host upon the cool porch, no?"

"No!" He echoed the word, but not her inflection. "I will not have you here. I have made it very plain that I want nothing to do with you. Go back to your own kind."

"If you mean that black pig, Ar-

turo, I have finish' with him. He is only the boy. He does not please my fancy as do you, my friend. So it is you I have come to find."

She had come close to him, the glance of her slumbrous eyes-seductive, patent lure in the smile that curved her lips, the pose of her body. The French scent she used filled his nostrils almost chokingly.

"Why—" and she laughed low in her throat—"are you so aloof? Why do you hide yourself away on this island, alone, when I could be here and make so nice for you? Why are you cruel?" She rolled the sound of the word, in the Latin way Drew found so obnoxious. One of her hands, with its heavy rings and jangling bracelets touched his arm. Drew jerked away as from a serpent. His eyes blazed.

"If you do not get into that boat and leave this island at once, I shall call my boys to carry you down. Now will you go?" he told her. She recoiled, her own eyes flashing green fire.

"You would not dare!" she blazed.

"Won't I?" and he turned to clap his hands for Gan.

It was at this precise and untoward moment that Cara came around the corner of the bungalow. The walk across the island had not dried the bathing suit, one of Drew's own, which clung wetly to her white body. All her lovely hair was loosed about her shoulders. She held in her hands a small bright bird, native to the island, which she had caught. She stopped transfixed at sight of Zita. That venomous person began to fill the air with poison. She coiled like a snake ready to strike.

"Ah!" she hissed. "So this is where you have fled, while Arturo seeks you. To *le Americaine*!" Like a fury she whirled back to Drew.

"And this—" she sneered angrily—"is why you repulse Zita. You have

other charms to please you!" Then her insolent meaning laugh drenched them as with something foul. Drew stepped toward her violently.

"You filthy—" but he could not say the word. To him Zita was less than a woman; yet there was Cara, her innocent eyes wide with horror.

But Zita was not to be stopped. All the jealousy of her fiery nature was roused.

"You know, is it not, that she is the mistress of Arturo? The what you call wife without the name? Yet you desire her pale charms to mine. Is there no blood in your veins?" The sense of her words made itself known to Cara.

"You lie!" she cried, her own eyes blazing. The scant wet bathing suit suddenly clothed a figure of outraged dignity. "I ran away from Arturo because I was afraid of him. I came here for protection."

Zita laughed scornfully, venomously. "A pretty story, no? Will Arturo believe that?" Then again, rage boiling over: "To me this man turns the stern refusal. You—" her eyes sweeping Cara with insult—"he brings to his island, all to himself. He makes us to think him the saint, and all the time he has you here!"

Gan, attracted by the voices, had come into the shadows of the porch. Drew called him down.

"Gan," he ordered, his eyes like blue ice, "take that woman down and put her in the boat. Then tell that brown fiend to take her back where she came from." Gan started toward Zita. She clung to Drew for a moment:

"Keep your paws from me, dirty dog!" She hurled a stream of invective at him in the native tongue. Then drawing herself up insolently she turned to Drew. "I go. But—" and her eyes flashed deadly hate into his own—"this affair is not at the end. Zita is not done with you!" Her last poisonous look played over them both



"Zita clung to Drew"

before she turned and went unhesitatingly down the beach.

Drew and Cara watched her step into the boat and saw it start across the water. When it had swept around the point of the island, Cara sank down on the steps and began to sob.

Drew looked down at her. At last



he spoke. "Don't cry," he said gently.

Night was falling on the island. Cara sat on the porch steps of the bungalow and watched dusk creep over the sea. The island brush was filled with twitters and calls as the bright plumaged birds that made it their home went to sleep. Curious heavy scents, strangely sweet, from the exotic flowers that bloomed there lay lovely on the air.

A week had passed since the stormy visit of Zita to the island, an undisturbed week. Under the spell of Drew's kindness, Cara's relaxed calm had returned. Once again she felt secure, here with him—and strangely happy. The days of her lonely childhood and miserable scared young girlhood seemed very far away. Seemed almost never to have been. Almost, it seemed, there had never been any time before this glowingly happy life on the island, here with Drew. She wanted never to leave it. The spell of the tropic night was upon her. It brought a languor to her, yet a fire to her veins. An impulse stirred within her. She wondered where Drew was, why he would not sit in this sweet tropic dusk with her.

She rose presently and went into the bungalow. In his own room Drew sat at the window, smoking. Sighing, with an intake of the breath, she went on into her own room. But she had no thought of sleep. The moon came suddenly from behind a cloud and flooded the island and the sea with radiance. Cara felt it calling. So lovely out there, on the white sand, in that silvery shimmering radiance.

Suddenly she turned, slipped out of her simple straight dress and stood only in the brief thin garment beneath. There was a netting cover over her bed. She caught it up and wrapped it about her body, leaving the ends free, like a scarf.

Presently, Drew, at the window,

caught sight of a whirling figure in the moonlight below. Mistily white and exquisitely lovely, it dipped and floated in a beautiful dance. Cara! He had not known that she could dance. Fascinated, he watched. Then he felt drawn, irresistibly. He stepped through the window, and, scarce knowing, moved toward her. Still she danced, smiling at him, coquetting away. Finally with a tempestuous whirl on her toes she finished. And in that instant, completely carried away, Drew caught her in his arms. Their lips met. Cara, trusting, gave herself up wholly to the ecstasy that thrilled her, and clung to him.

After a long moment, Drew lifted her, fairy light, and carried her through the window. He dropped into his seat, and held her in his arms. She lay with eyes half closed, long dark lashes making shadows on her cheeks. There in the scented mystery of night he thrilled to her beauty, to the intoxicating sweetness of her in his arms. He bent his lips to hers again, kissed her eyes, her throat, one soft white shoulder, and then again her lips.

Then realization came to him. He was a gentleman. Lucille Martin's hurt of him had destroyed many things, but not that. Cara had fled to him for protection, and now he must protect her against himself. He looked down at her as she lay, still with eyes closed. He steeled himself, and shook her gently until she opened her eyes.

"Go to your room, dear," he said very gently. "And don't come out of it again tonight. Tomorrow I want to talk to you. I must send you where you will be safe."

"Back to Porta Isle?" she cried in affright.

"No!" with tender reassurance. "You wouldn't be safe there. I mean to America where some one will take care of you. You must not remain here, on this island alone with me."

She looked up at him with troubled eyes. He had risen, lifting her with him, and stood very tall and straight. It was not easy to do. She trusted him wholly, but she did not understand. Her senses were still swaying with the joyous tumult of the dance, and that time in his arms. His kisses had dizzied her. She sighed. And Drew was troubled for them both.

"Go door," he said, taking her hands and looking into her eyes. "Do as I tell you. And everything will be all right."

Obediently, she turned and left him. Drew heard her enter her room, then he went out on the porch and tried to think, there in the heavy-scented tropic night.

Hours later, he went to his sleeping room, no nearer a solution of his problem. Without undressing, he lay down on his bed, and sought to compel slumber. In vain! The thought of Cara, of her beauty, her nearness, would not be banished. His room was bathed in moonlight, the same silver light that rested on her. The night whispered outside his window. His blood hammered in his ears. All his senses stirred.

He got up restlessly. His eyes went to the doorway of Cara's room. She was just beyond it. He stepped to the door. Cara lay sleeping like a child, one lovely arm, snowy in the moonlight, above her head, her thick soft hair over the pillow. In that moment every feeling went out of Drew's heart except tenderness. She was so innocent, so trusting and so sweet. He knew at last as he stood there that he loved her, with the tender enveloping love a man gives to the one woman. That was the feeling he had been fighting against, not anything less fine and true.

Tomorrow, instead of sending her away, he would go with her to the white priest in the port, and they would be married. Then he would keep her with him always. And as he

so decided, a great peace filled his soul. Very gently he stooped and kissed the outflung hand. Then he turned back to his own room.

At that moment a wild yell broke the stillness of the night. It came from the group of houses where Gan and the other boys had their quarters. It was followed by more yells, which turned into a frenzy, as of some one terribly injured, and then there was a succession of shots. Drew's first thought was of Cara. He sprang back to her door. She was sitting erect, frightened out of her sleep, her eyes wide. She jumped out of bed and clung to him. The noise outside had grown.

"Come into the living-room," he told her in a tense whisper, and with his arm about her upheld her shuddering form. He led her to a corner out of range of windows and doors. "Stay here and don't move until I come for you, or until you hear me call."

Cara shrank back in the corner, trembling, and watched while he secured a gun. He threw her a reassuring glance, then ran from the room in the direction of the disturbance. Just off the bungalow porch Drew nearly stepped on the body of one of his brown boys who lay moaning. He was bleeding profusely, but after a quick look Drew thought his wounds could wait and ran on to the other houses where he could hear the sounds of struggle.

Within, Gan was engaged in combat with a strange brown man. Drew's quick assistance gave Gan the mastery, and the other man went down under a blow from Gan's huge fist. He grabbed some strips of native grass woven into rope to secure him while he panted to Drew:

"That Arturo and 'nother man—two mens—run round house!"

Arturo! So Zita had made her threat good. A great fear for Cara suddenly filled his heart.

"Come on," he ordered Gan, and ran. Just as he reached the side of his sleeping room he caught sight of a brown ragged form crawling through the window. He lunged after, but gave way to Gan who came running up. Gan scrambled through the window in pursuit. A shot rang out in the room, and the bullet sped past Drew's head. The intruder was armed. Strange, for an island man. He quickly feared for his own man, but the next instant Gan's voice evolved from a series of grunts into the words:

"Got heem, boss!" exultantly. "I feex heem. You git other one."

Drew ran around the house toward the door. . . .

When Drew left her, Cara crouched down in the corner in terror, afraid to breathe. She heard the sounds of the struggle and waited in sheer fright for Drew's return. But would he return? A sudden great fear for his safety filled her. He had told her to stay there. But she might be able to help! What if he should need her!

The thought sent her stumbling out of her corner into the light of the moon that filled the room. And then there was a sound from the door. She looked up—and into the evil grinning face of Arturo! She tried to scream, but the sound was paralyzed in her throat. Quick as a cat, Arturo sprang the distance to her side and caught her throat between his long strong fingers.

"I'll choke you if you scream," in a cruel hissing whisper, and she knew he meant it. "I'd hate to do that. I've just found you!" He laughed, low, in sheer gloating triumph.

Cara's breath came in sobbing gasps. Arturo had found her! If only Carlton would come! *What had happened to Carlton?*

"You thought you could get away from me!" Arturo breathed down into her face. He seemed to be upholding her by that grasp on her throat.

And his face was so hideously near. Her knees were sagging under her, and his grasp hurt cruelly. "You come to live with the fine white man. You fooled me for a while. But I have found you. You won't care so much for him when my boys are finish' with him. He will die like a rat. He should not have fooled with Arturo!" He leaned closer, and his eyes burned down into hers.

"You thought I wouldn't want you, after you came to him. Was that your plan? Bah! You're mine, and no one can take you from me. You're going back with me tonight, to stay!" Utterly sickened, Cara tried to break from his grasp. But his arms went round her, holding her, his face coming closer. "Smile, Cara, *mia*," his own cruelly smiling mouth near hers. "Smile, and then kiss me!"

Cara prayed inarticulately for some salvation, and then merciful blackness closed over her. She became limp in his arms. Arturo cursed, and straightened up, turning to carry her from the room. And came face to face with Drew, who had entered in time to hear Arturo's last words, to see as he bent his lips toward Cara's, before she fainted. He turned to fire and steel. That black beast holding the girl he loved. He would fight for her, kill for her, die for her, if need!

His eyes were deadly as he faced Arturo, lifting his gun to seek aim. Arturo, quick to realize, swung Cara's limp body between them, blocking Drew's chance to shoot. This gave him time to draw his own knife with one free hand. In position to spring, he let Cara's body slip to the floor, and in that instant stepped clear of her and hurled himself at Drew.

Drew fired, but the shot went wild as Arturo's body struck his and knocked the gun from his hand. The next instant he was in close struggle with Arturo, locked in deadly effort, each intent on killing the other. Drew's hope was to ward off that

treacherous knife until his superior strength gave him the mastery.

As they rolled on the floor in that silent terrible struggle, Cara opened her eyes. As her senses cleared and she realized what was happening, she found her voice and screamed. That scream reached Gan. He had left his second man bound with curtains on the floor of Drew's sleeping room, and had climbed back out of the window in search of Drew and Arturo.

At Cara's scream, Gan ran with catlike speed to the door of the bungalow where a glance showed him the struggling figures on the floor. He burst through the screen and into the room.

Drew was momentarily on top in the whirling struggle, leaning back out of reach of the knife aimed at his throat. This brought Arturo's face into view, and at sight of it Gan's face underwent an awful change. His eyes blazed, then set in deadly hate. His lips writhed. His whole body set in steel-strung crouching, like a tiger about to spring and tear its victim to bits.

His powerful brown hand shot past Drew's face and twisted the knife from Arturo's fingers. As Drew relaxed, he felt himself pushed aside, and Gan was in his place, holding Arturo powerless to move, helpless in Gan's horrible strength.

Drew, breathing hard, got to his feet and stared down at them, Cara flung herself against him and hid her face on his breast. His arms closed about her, while fascinated, he watched Gan. Something dreadful had taken possession of the man.

Gan, holding Arturo in his terrible steel grasp, was talking in a way that made Drew's blood run cold. Arturo was livid with deadly terror, his eyes starting from his head.

"Long time ago," Gan was saying in a voice awful to hear, "you laughed—*hee hee!* Made your men beat a brown boy. You laughed and

laughed, and told them beat heem more. You laughed until the breath went out of hees body and he *died*. That little boy my brudder. *Now Gan goin' keel you!*"

His fingers closed about Arturo's throat, shutting back the scream that welled there.

Drew lifted Cara and carried her through the door into the night.

The sun blazed down on a brilliant blue sea and the white buildings of the port city. It blazed down on the deck of the liner, slowly steaming out, where Drew and Cara stood, looking back at the city nestling in the sun. Both were in new white. Cara was lovely, so slim and young, her face alight with joy.

"Take your last look at the islands, dear," he said, his voice deep with tenderness, "for we are never coming back to them. In America, you will never be unhappy again."

Cara drew close to her husband's side. They had been married that morning by the white priest in the port, and together they were leaving the islands where her life had been filled with terror, and going to that land to which Drew had never expected to return.

But he was going gladly. The image of another woman had forever left his heart; only Cara was there, his wife, the girl he knew he was born to love, for whom he had fought and would have died.

She lifted her love-filled eyes to his. "I can never be unhappy anywhere again," she said softly. "For I have you." He smiled back at her.

Heedless of watching eyes, for the island romance was already known, and all the passengers were staring at the newly wedded couple, he bent and kissed her, then looked over her head to the far horizon where sea and sky eternally met.

Beyond lay happiness just as eternal.

# Clever Kids

By TOM WILSON

**W**ILLIAM MAYLIN was a self-made man and there were times when he looked upon his work and felt forced to confess that he had turned out a pretty satisfactory job. And his secret—which he would have reluctantly divulged given practically no opening at all—was personal contact. Most of his furniture business he ran himself. He was not the sort who believed in trusting an out-of-town buyer to the tender mercies of any uninterested and unimaginative underling. Not he! Came there a prospect from the sticks, William Maylin took the evening off and gave his undivided and earnest attention to the visitor. And, his buyers being strictly of the masculine gender, he was free from any annoying jealousy at home. Rich, successful in marriage and business at fifty! What more could anyone ask? . . .

William Maylin emerged from his room in his gorgeous downtown apartment jauntily drawing a glove of delicate fawn over his meaty hand.

"My dear," he announced, "I am devoting my energies this evening to one of our Chicago buyers. I may be a bit late," he flicked an invisible speck of dust from his coat sleeve. He made rather an imposing appearance, as he well knew—(although an envious enemy might have called attention to the fact that he *was* taking on a pound or so at the waist)—and he didn't propose to have it ruined by any speck of dust. Not even an invisible one.

"Very well," replied his wife who had become accustomed to the de-

mands of business, "I shan't wait up for you. I may be busy until rather late, myself. Tonight, as it happens, I'm entertaining some of my settlement workers."

Mr. Maylin wagged a stubby finger roguishly. "Ah, ah!" he said humorously, "a fine way to keep your husband from home! A fine way, indeed! Now I'll be afraid to come back at all. These hen parties scare me to death." He kissed his wife majestically.

Once outside the door, however, he permitted himself a slight let-down. In fact, a close observer would have said he was positively gay. Of all the buyers Mr. Maylin entertained he enjoyed the ones from Chicago best, and as Mr. Maylin thought of them, he hummed a tune and skipped light-heartedly down the stairs—(his exuberance could not wait for a pokey lift)—through the lobby and out to the street.

He flourished his stick at a passing cab and, caroling his destination to the exceedingly hard-boiled occupant of the driver's seat, clambered in and sank back in the upholstery beaming largely upon the world in general. The taxi, having threaded nicely a fine maze of early evening traffic, pulled up in front of a store. It was a florist's headquarters and Mr. Maylin danced happily in, for none knew better than he how a Chicago furniture buyer likes to have a dozen or so American Beauties to wear in his buttonhole when in New York.

Holding the huge box protectingly under his arm, he re-entered the cab

and off they went once more. The next stop was before a quiet little apartment house in West Seventy-fifth Street. Here Mr. Maylin paid the driver, tipped him liberally, and dismissed him. Then he went in, ran the lift up to the fifth floor and inserting a key into the lock of one of the doors that confronted him, walked in.

At the sound of his step a low musical voice from an inner room sang "Hello, Daddy!"

Laying aside his hat and stick, Mr. Maylin once more embraced the box and entered the room whence came the voice we have just mentioned. The fluffy heap that reclined on the divan put down a book and a cigarette as he entered. "How is my great big boy tonight?" she asked. Then, catching sight of the box, she squealed in pretty delight. "What has he there?" she wanted to know excitedly, "S'prise for Peggy?" She undid the box and inhaled deliciously of the liberated perfume. "Oh, Daddy," she breathed, "aren't you *wonderful* to think of such nice things!"

"Thank me pretty," suggested Mr. Maylin.

"O' course!" complied Peggy, promptly breaking off one of the buds and putting it in his buttonhole. "There!" giving it a final pat, "now my boy looks boo'ful!"

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Maylin cooly.

She laughed indulgently and rising to her knees, kissed the bald spot which despite the liberal application of the best tonics money could buy, was beginning to show at the crown of his head.

She went to get a vase for the flowers, arranged them, and came back to the divan. A long, oval, plush covered box had usurped her place. Idly she toyed with it a moment and then opened it. The resultant brilliance made her blink. She looked at Mr. Maylin like a frightened child. "Oh, Daddy!" she whispered in awe, as if

afraid the object in her hand would fade before an outspoken word, "Daddy is this—for me?"

Pleased, Mr. Maylin nodded with a smile. He rather thought the necklace would have its effect. It had come high, but what of that? Peggy was a good little scout and deserved the best. Besides, she would never let him pay anything for the apartment—

She held the string of diamonds to the light watching the play of light. "Why—" she exclaimed in a hushed voice—"it must have cost 'most a hundred dollars."

"Eleven thousand," Mr. Maylin set her right on this point with a tolerant smile for her innocence. "And," he added suggestively, "do I get something awful nice for it?"

This was no time, as Peggy was well aware, for minor coquetry. For such a little girl, with such wide blue eyes and such a trustful child's mouth, Peggy knew quite a trifle about this and that. She kissed him tenderly on his expensive lips.

"Is that all?" he queried archly.

Peggy sank back in the pillows and shook a chiding finger at him. "Greedy boy," she cooed, "isn't he ever satisfied?"

Mr. Maylin leaned toward her, perspiring gently with the effort and the intensity of his passion. "Babe," he whispered a trifle hoarsely, "you know you've got me crazy about you!"

She interrupted him with a pat on the cheek. "You're a dear boy," she said softly, "and I guess—I guess I'm kind of crazy about you too! If only you weren't married to that nasty woman—"

Mr. Maylin resumed an upright position. "Yes," he agreed, "if! Poor Elsie," he went on charitably, "she does her best. Settlement work has sort of taken my place with her, I guess. She just doesn't understand me, that's about the size of it. But she does love me and if I suggested a divorce it would break her heart." He paused a

moment to think that one over and, in the interval, Peggy stroked his hand comprehendingly. He sighed heavily. "So I guess we might as well let things go on the way they are. There's no use spoiling *our* happiness, is there?"

Peggy tucked the plush box beneath a pillow and held her arms open. "No," she agreed, "there isn't!"

Now just because Mr. Maylin has tricked us and his wife—and we really shouldn't be too harsh because, after all, Peggy was a cute little parcel and Mrs. Maylin *had* been a bit careless of her starches and sweets of late—is that any reason why we should follow him and let the home fires flicker on in loneliness? Never! And, if you can stand a few minutes of a meeting of settlement workers, we'll just look in for a moment—to maintain the spirit of impartiality.

After the door had closed upon her preoccupied spouse, Mrs. Maylin at once set about preparing for her meeting. It might be fitting to pause for a second and enlarge upon the sadness of a woman's lot when her husband has tired of her.

But just one look at Mrs. Maylin's face as she bustled about getting ready for the evening wipes away all traces of pity. So wrapped up was she in her noble work that she positively smiled. So far from empty did her life seem that you might have thought a mere husband was excess baggage.

She went to a cellarette and extracted therefrom a decanter of golden-brown liquid which she put, together with a siphon and a couple of glasses, on a small table that stood by the side of a large divan. She then added a generous box of cigarettes to the collection. . . . Settlement workers, as everyone knows, must have a spot of refreshment during the evening or they can't do their work properly. . . . Having arranged the above mentioned articles to her complete satis-

faction, she went to the phone and asked for a number.

"Hello," she said in answer to the voice at the other end, "Jimmy? Everything is all right, Jimmy!"

And that was all of *that* conversation. She stretched herself on the divan—which sagged slightly beneath her weight, with just the faintest suggestion of a squeak—and, taking up a book, set out impatiently to kill a little time.

After a surprisingly short interval there was the sound of a key in the outside lock and a step was heard in the hall.

"Jimmy?" she called, not too loudly.

"Uh-huh," came the answer followed an instant later by a tall, fresh-faced young man in dinner clothes. "Suppose," he asked, smiling in the doorway, "it hadn't been Jimmy. It might have been 'Willy,' you know."

"I knew your step," she explained fondly, "my heart told me." With her own fair hands she mixed him a drink which he sipped moodily. "What's the matter with my little boy tonight?" she questioned, running her fingers affectionately through his blond hair, "He doesn't seem to be happy."

"He's not," confirmed Jimmy briefly. Then: "Well," he said slowly, "there's no point in putting it off. You'll have to know *some* time. I'm afraid I'll have to leave you, Elsie."

"For very long?" Her tones were frightened at the prospect of even a short separation.

"Forever!"

"Jimmy!" She was genuinely terror-stricken now and clung desperately to him. "Tell me—what's the matter?"

"Oh," he said dejectedly, "it's my debts; I can't pay them and they have to be paid. That's all!" He was silent a moment. "I've had a pretty bad week on the stock market. I guess I can thumb it to Hollywood. Only—" he squeezed her hand—"it's kind of rough leaving you. For me, I mean!"

"You mustn't leave me," she answered. "How — do you owe very much?" Her question was that of a duting mother to a thoughtless son.

"It wouldn't be anything if I had it, but it seems like a couple of billion when I haven't. It's about six thousand, I guess. I'm afraid to figure them all up—"

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Maylin rising, "I have a little present for you. It isn't much, but maybe—" she suggested with a smile—"you can sell it and pay off a few dollars."

Jimmy reproached her with a look. "You know I couldn't do a thing like that," he said. "I wouldn't sell a present from you, Elsie, if it were the only thing between me and starvation."

Mrs. Maylin kissed him ardently. "I don't believe you would," she soothed, "you dear boy."

She left the room and Jimmy did a good deal toward bucking his spirits with a couple of stiff drinks.

When she returned she directed Jimmy to close his eyes and hold out his hand. He obeyed and grasped a small particle of paper, neatly folded. He opened it mystified. It was a check for eight thousand made out to James L. Holden and signed in the neat script of Elsie A. Maylin. She smiled her amusement as he gasped.

"But Elsie," he stammered, "you can't—why I can't let you do such a thing!"

She stayed the flood of his speech with an expansive finger. "Sh!" she directed, "there's lots more where that came from. You can call it a loan, if you'd rather."

Jimmy took her in his strong young arms. "Oh," he exclaimed passionately, "why can't I take you away from all this? If only your husband—"

She interrupted him. "Yes," she agreed, "if! Poor William," she went on charitably, "he does his best. Business has sort of taken my place with

him, I guess. He just doesn't understand me, that's the whole thing. But he does love me and if I suggested a divorce it would break his heart." She paused for a moment to shed an inward tear for her absent mate and in the interval Jimmy patted her comprehendingly. She sighed heavily. "So I guess we might as well let things go on the way they are. There's no use spoiling *our* happiness, is there?"

Jimmy tucked the oblong of paper in his vest pocket. "No," he agreed replacing his arms about her, "there isn't." . . .

When he left the Maylin apartment he got into a taxi which immediately scurried across town. Arrived at his destination, he ascended in the lift, rang a door-bell twice and stepped considerably back into the shadows. The door was opened without delay and a touseled heap of silk and humanity was catapulted into his arms. A glad cry of "Jimmy" was smothered in his shirt front.

"Any luck?" he inquired casually.

"Diamonds," she announced briefly; "How 'bout you?"

"Debts," he told her mysteriously and produced the check.

In her turn she exhibited the necklace. "Eleven grand," she said with pride. "Told me so himself."

Jimmy's eyes opened wide in respectful astonishment. "Gosh, Peggy!" he exclaimed in wondering admiration. "Gee, but you're a wonderful kid! Say! If we shake these old buzzards down once more we'll have enough to set up housekeeping right!"

Peggy snuggled close to him. "Jimmy," she whispered in a small voice from his shoulder, "let's not wait. Let's get married right away. We have our diamonds and our debts and—each other, and that's an awful lot. Besides," she roused herself to emphasize her point, "if I have to kiss that mushy old puff-ball once more I'll scream!"



# No Shoes to Her Feet

By ELIZABETH HAYES

FOR some time now, Gerald Tufts had been comforting Harrison Andrews' wife. Just the exact moment when he had begun making love to her, and thus adding that complication to the slowly widening gap between the successful, middle-aged, busy broker and his beautiful, idle, young wife, remained a matter of conjecture between even the two of them. Little by little, they had come to the place where nothing much mattered but their dynamic interest in each other.

The week-end was to be spent at an exclusive and remote desert resort, where there was little likelihood of their being recognized. Even though Nell Andrews contemplated divorcing Harrison, she thought it best to postpone gossip until the time was ripe for definite action.

Gerald had been to Palm Inn, and he assured her that the register

showed mainly the names of those whose social interests were entirely bound up in themselves and party, and those whose chief interest was in each other; therefore, the place was a safe rendezvous. From every angle, Palm Inn seemed ideal. That is, it had until last evening.

It was so easy to contemplate a secret tryst with Gerald, who danced and sang, and could make love in a hundred different ways. An exciting lark it was to select and discard this silken this and that, and pack her fitted walrus bag.

But last evening, driving home in the white moonlight, after visiting Harrison at the sanitarium, she suddenly felt that she never wanted to see Gerald again. She had fully made up her mind to give him up; not to keep their desert tryst. Then after a sleepless night, here she was in her own car, a few blocks from home, try-



*Comforting Andrews' wife*

ing to explain the unexplainable to the man she loved, and who, by his very nearness threatened to overthrow her decision.

"It's no use to coax, Gerald. I can't go. We've got to stop. We've got to quit seeing each other." Her voice had a tone of finality in it.

"You don't mean that, Nell." Gerald's arm tightened about her slim shoulders, as he lowered his face to hers. "Answer me this. Be perfectly honest with yourself. Do you love me?"

She laughed softly before answering. As though his question were perfectly absurd.

"Silly boy. You know I do, but I have no right to. I'm the wife of a good man, and madly in love with you, and you know it without asking me. But as wild as I am about you Gerald, I just can't make up my mind to deliberately go to Palm Inn as your wife. Not after last night. Harrison looked so much older, and so worried about himself and me and everything. He liked the dressing-gown I bought him. Said he'd only need it a week longer, but the head doctor called me day before yesterday over long distance and told me that Harrison needs a long rest and no worry. That he should have let up two years ago—and Gerald—he also said that a real shock might prove fatal!"

"Good gravy, sweetheart! You talk as though we were plotting his murder. He need never know about us. We aren't publishing it in the newspapers. You're making an awful fuss over nothing. Why thousands of couples spend a week-end together and no one is the wiser. You love me and I love you, wife or no wife. Isn't that reason enough?"

"I know, Gerald, but—"

"No 'buts' about it. If you were free I'd marry you this minute and we would go to Palm Inn just the same. What's the difference to-day—or next year? We both might be dead by that

time. Come on, sweetheart. Don't you trust me?"

Nell looked straight into the depths of his eyes.

"I do trust you, Gerald. You're awfully dependable—but I can't erase last evening from my mind. It is and it isn't Harrison's fault that I'm lonely and bored to tears day after day. Oh! I'm so upset; I scarcely know my own mind."

"I know this much. Instead of sitting by the fireplace making church steeples with your ten pink little fingers, while your old man snoozes, and later watching him depart for a banquet, as the guest speaker in a gray business suit, you're going to be dancing in the arms of a hubby in evening clothes. I guarantee that you'll never be bored stiff with me around. I'll treat your dumps then as I do now; sing you a song to the tune of my steel guitar. Can't resist *that*, can you—dimples?"

A smile broke through for an instant.

"But Gerald," she said seriously, "Harrison is good and I didn't realize how bored I was until you came along. I really didn't think much about love until I woke to the fact that I was utterly miserable when you didn't call up, or apparently weren't thinking of me. I tried dreadfully hard to be interested in Harrison's business affairs and even tried to coax him to be younger; to respond like you did to things I said and did, but he just didn't know how to. Then came the day—by the piano—when you kissed me until I almost fainted. It was just exactly what I had been wanting from my husband, and I got from you. Then came your rosebuds the next day. I was still in bed. Oh, sweetheart, what is the use of hashing it all over? Will you kiss me once more, get out of this car and never, never see me again?"

Gerald meditated a moment, then queried:

"Where is your week-end bag?"

"Home. I almost unpacked it last night."

Gerald frowned darkly, then said:

"I love you as much as you love me, yet you only speak of your side of this affair. I'm human just the same as you are. Once before you asked me not to see you or call you again, and I didn't and what happened? You called me. You've taken all of the responsibility of our clandestine affair so far. I'm willing to assume all of it now. I promise you that you will never be sorry."

"Please, please, Gerald, don't strip me of all my last night's resolutions."

"I'm not stripping you of anything, Nell. Either you don't or you do love me. If you don't you'll trot your little self out to the sanitarium; and if you do, you'll go by and pick up your things and we'll be off for the desert country." He removed his arm from behind her and struck a match to a waiting cigarette. "Make up your mind," he said ignoring the slim little hand that crept over to his knee and rested there affectionately.

Several times Nell started to speak. Finally the words came, reluctantly.

"Let's go in your car. I'd so much rather. If anything happened it would look better."

"Nothing is going to happen. We're going in your car just as we planned in the beginning."

"But Gerald—"

He did not let her finish. "Why all the argument over again, doddle bug? I'm assuming all of the responsibility, even if we are in your car. I've got a very good reason for wanting you to drive your car. I'll wait here. It ought not to take you more than ten—say fifteen minutes at the most." Without warning, he kissed her square on the lips. Freeing herself she looked about quickly to see if there was any one who might have witnessed his impulsive caress. Throwing his head back he burst into a roar of laughter,

then kissed her again. "We'll be back Monday morning pronto, little girl, and you can be at the sanitarium by noon. Better put in some stout shoes. We'll probably go away up into the canyon."

As he got out of the car, he said: "Better bring *our* steel guitar along. I might need it."

She smiled, but the flash of fire in her eyes was of more significance to Gerald.

The desert highway lay like an endless, slick, black, leather belt.

A smart, red roadster sped along, now slowing down or speeding up, an expensive mechanical toy responding to the whim of the attractive young woman in a white sport coat and close fitting beret.

The man beside the woman at the wheel, was a long, rather handsome chap. Keen of visage, with deep set eyes that danced when he smiled, and pleaded when necessary, he was decidedly at home in the company of women. They interested him immensely, but Nell more than any other.

"Now, aren't you glad I insisted on you driving your car?" he went on. "I can make love to you all of the way and you can't stop me."

The woman gave a low surprised laugh.

"You're wonderful. So magnetic and strong! Sometimes I really am frightened at what we are doing. It's awfully dangerous to love any one as I love you."

"You mean it's dangerously nice," offered Gerald tenderly.

"I wish we were really married and humming along this way."

"We will some day, Nell. I couldn't love you any more than I do if seven preachers had said the words over us. Do you know what I think?" He touched her rounded red cheek with his lips and waited for her to delve further into the archives of his mind.

"A penny's all I offer," she said half smiling.

"I think you are the sweetest, most beautiful girl in all the world. I love your little fingers more than my whole life."

She turned quickly and looked straight into his eyes. What she saw there caused her to inwardly tremble. Once before, she had felt all full of trembling. It had been at home—over by the piano.

Men trudging along the highway with packs on their backs. Men raising uncertain hands for rides. Uncouth-looking failures. A whole family changing a tire on a broken-down car.

Walnut picking time beyond the horizon.

Strange that there was always that beautiful thing called hope to lure one on; despite the many slams on the jaw its followers received, it continued to beckon mankind.

Gerald and she weren't failures, Nell knew. Yet they were on this same highway beckoned on by the hope of love. A scared jack-rabbit scampered across in safety. She wondered if he, too, had hope in his little wild breast. Gerald always laughed her fears away and re-established hope when she lost the feel of it.

Again she glanced proudly at the young, clean-shaven face so close to her own and nestled farther down into the magnetic strength of his encircling arm.

Sage-brush and sand dunes. Fleecy tufts of cottonlike clouds drifting about in an azure sky. A flock of black-birds high on some wires. A woman in a long dress and a thin, stooped man with a little bundle, walking ahead of her.

Surely not a little baby on her arm! Why—the woman had no shoes on!

Nell slammed on the brakes, pitching Gerald slightly forward.

"For gosh sake's, Nell—drive on!"

His exasperation was apparent. "We haven't room; that's their hard luck."

She stared at him for an instant, then slipped out from his detaining arm and went swiftly over to the couple.

The young, bare-footed woman clasped her scantily wrapped baby tightly and gazed with astonishment into the gentle face, framed in curling wisps of fair hair, that peeked out from a smart white beret. Involuntarily, she glanced down to her feet. The startled look disappeared as Nell inquired their destination.

"We've only room for one, but perhaps," she looked over at the thin man who had put down his bundle and was coughing violently. Between paroxysms that racked his emaciated body she saw him motion for his wife to accept the offer of a ride.

The woman shook her head definitely in answer to his gestures, and told Nell that she would not leave her husband. Fearing that she might be misunderstood, she stepped nearer and in a whisper said:

"Thank you for your offer." Her chin was up and her eyes smiling. "I know we look failures, but we really aren't. We've still got love left. Our marriage has been a happy one, regardless, and every minute we have together now—counts double." She tapped her chest and looked over at the rapidly breathing man, then added: "Overwork and worry." In her eyes were two great unshed tears as she brought them back to Nell's stricken face.

There was a sharp honk from the red roadster.

Except for a slight frown, Nell ignored it.

"Your husband is getting impatient. Thank you so much." The woman glanced admiringly at the car and its occupant.

Nell flushed a dull red. Quickly opening her suede bag, she took out a twenty-dollar bill and some silver.

"This is all the money I have with me," she said raising her voice and looking toward Gerald expectantly. Seeing that her unspoken appeal was ignored, she took a step nearer the car, hesitated, then turned back and placed the money in the woman's hand.

As if pondering seriously, an unexpected problem, she walked over to the roadster and reached for her week-end bag. Disregarding Gerald's protesting hand she took out a pair of stout, brown made-to-order walking shoes and matching hose, and laid them beside the little bundle.

Hesitating a moment before the woman, she patted the babe's wan cheek, and then ran quickly over to her car.

Without as much as a glance in Gerald's direction, she slid behind the wheel, threw the car into reverse, and

with a wide determined sweep began turning the roadster about.

"Where are you going? Have you completely lost your mind?" Gerald eyed her quizzically and flipped away an unfinished cigarette.

There was a pause of at least ten seconds before Nell answered in a low perfectly controlled voice:

"'Lost my mind' *is* good!" She half laughed, her eyes straight ahead. "On the contrary, Gerald Tufts, I've just found it, and every minute counts double now. When Harrison first met me I, too, was sick and without shoes. . . . It's just as though a veil had been lifted; he's overworked — become a drudge in order to give me luxuries. I was just a penniless, sick usherette in an endowed bed. If it hadn't been for him I would have left the hospital, as I entered, wearing borrowed shoes."

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## DO YOU REMEMBER?

*By Celia Cheesman*

Do you remember, love, long, long ago  
When flames of youth burned hotly in your heart,  
You swore that years would bring no dreaded change  
And vowed that we two lovers would not part?

Do you remember, love, that yesterday? . . .  
With twining fingers, there beneath the skies,  
We walked along the silver-stretching sand  
And saw new beauties with our eager eyes.

Love's first sweet terror! Bringing fear and trembling—  
Marvel—that life could be so wondrous sweet! . . .  
So many years ago, that first awakening,  
And yet the time has fled with speedy feet.

And you? Do you remember? Do not answer  
But take me in your arms, and as you hold  
Me close within your clasp, still strong and tender,  
I know the fire of love burns as of old!

# He Wasn't Disappointed

By LOUIS WENDT

"HEY, Bobbie," shouted Marilynne Mayne, with all the enthusiasm of having just made a great and profitable discovery, "I know who'll give you a job."

"Who?" Bobbie's voice floated sweetly through the open doorway of the bathroom.

"Jimmy Dull," replied Marilynne. "Say, I don't know why I didn't think of him sooner. No brains, I guess, huh? Jimmy's regular, Bobbie. You'll like him."

"You're just Jimmy's type," went on Marilynne gleefully. "And baby, that boy pays real money."

"Sounds great!" called out Bobbie. "What's his line?"

"He's an inventor."

"Gorgeous! What does he invent?"

"Evidence, dearie," said Marilynne bluntly.

"Oh!" Bobbie was a bit puzzled. So she changed the subject, temporarily at least. "Marilynne," she said, "while you're out there in the front room will you hand me that bottle of bath salts. I bought it this afternoon. Roger & Gallet's. It's on the couch beside my hat, I think. I'd come and get it myself, but I'm in the bath."

Marilynne found the bottle and brought it to Bobbie. "For cryin' out loud!" she exclaimed, as she glimpsed Bobbie reveling in the refreshing luxury of a hot bath in mid-afternoon. "You burn me up. All week you've been yelpin' about takin' a taxi over the hill to the poorhouse—and look at you now. Anybody's think you was Lady Godiva, waitin' for a horse."

Bobbie laughed. She had always believed in comfort under any circumstances. Over the end of the bath a thick, fleecy towel had been care-



"Wash behind the ears"

fully spread so that when she leaned back, her beautiful white shoulders wouldn't come in chilly contact with

placard on the wall behind the massive Dull. Bobbie looked at the placard.

It announced in blazing type that James K. Dull was both the nominal and active head of the Dull Detective Agency. *Specialists in Divorce. Detective work in all its branches. Expert male and female operatives provided for all occasions. Shadowing expertly done. Investigations for confidential information conducted on reasonable terms.*

"That," said Marilynne, nodding in the direction of the sign, "is my old friend, Jimmy."

Jimmy Dull smiled. He was not a man immune to the grosser forms of flattery. "You aren't in any trouble, Miss Saunders, are you?" he asked hopefully. He thought Marilynne might have brought him in a customer.

"Oh, no, not me!" Bobbie cooed, and she crossed her legs with a truly charitable disregard for the amount of silk displayed. Bobbie had beautiful legs; even her enemies admitted that.

"I'll tell you how it is, Jimmy," began Marilynne pulling her chair around towards the head of the Dull Detective Agency and speaking in a confidential undertone, while Jimmy shot appraising glances at Bobbie.

Bobbie thought James Dull had the coldest gray eyes she had ever seen. His gaze was as intensely piercing as an X-ray, and almost as impersonal. It made her feel positively naked. She knew there wasn't a single alluring curve in her fresh young body that escaped his notice. It was as if he were some ancient slave-dealer examining with an eye to future profits the charms of an unfortunate maiden whom he had been commissioned to purchase for some wealthy potentate. Bobbie almost expected the man to come over and look at her teeth to find out how old she was. She had

never felt quite so openly on sale before.

If Jimmy realized that he was embarrassing Bobbie, it didn't bother him. He kept right on staring. Finally he said to Marilynne in a loud voice:

"Maggie, she looks aces to me. Aces!" Then he turned directly to Bobbie. "Maggie's bin tellin' me that you'd like to try your hand at bein' a lady 'op.' You've got the looks, kid, but it's a tough racket. You ain't too soft-hearted now, are you, Miss Saunders? The soft-hearted kind don't make good 'ops.' That don't mean you gotta be hard-boiled, you know. Just firm."

"Oh, I'm not a weak woman," protested Bobbie lightly.

"Say, Jimmy, that kid's as cold as snow on a convent roof," put in Marilynne.

"Maggie should have been a press agent," went on Jimmy, keeping his cigar in his mouth as he talked. "I always call her Maggie because when she used to work for me—one of the best female operatives I ever had, too—her name was Maggie Mehan. I never can get used to this new high-hat handle of hers. What is it? Mari—Marilynne Mayne, ain't it?"

"Trust Jimmy to give away secrets!" Marilynne laughed.

"Now about a job," continued the evidence inventor. "Business ain't been so good lately. I've been layin' off my regular staff. Still, for a girl friend of one of my old 'ops,' I ought to be able to do somethin'; huh, Maggie? What's the sense of havin' friends if you can't do them a favor, once in a while. That's my motto."

"Thanks, Jimmy, you're a peach," exclaimed Marilynne, "now how about takin' two hungry little girls out to dinner?"

"Same old Maggie—just as much a chiseler as ever, aren't you?" said Jimmy as he pushed his chair back from the desk. "All right, I'm game."

Wait till we have a little ball first."

"What is it—Scotch?" asked Marilynne.

"Yes, sir!" replied Dull dramatically. "The Scotch you get nowadays ain't much good. But you try this!"

Bobbie hardly touched the liquor. She was a careful girl. Besides she didn't like the taste of the stuff for one reason, and moreover, she was too cool a proposition to take a chance on getting her wits fuddled with alcohol. Things had happened to girls who got drunk. Things, that if they happened to Bobbie at all were going to happen when she knew just what she was doing.

As a matter of fact, Bobbie Saunders was nobody's fool but her own. She was really a nice kid. Her main trouble was that, in spite of a certain superficial sophistication that she had acquired, she couldn't seem to outgrow the naïve notion that the world owed her a living. Poor Bobbie, she really thought she could collect the debt!

She had started out as a gold-digger in a small way. Just a girl who insisted that the boys who took her out should take her home in a taxi. Under the tutelage of the infinitely more experienced Marilynne Mayne, she was fast becoming a professional chiseler. And she wanted everything for nothing.

Silly? Of course she was! Lots of other girls who think they're wise are in the same balloon. Drifting with the wind and not a single brain for ballast.

During the progress of dinner, Jimmy Dull grew slightly autobiographical.

"I used to be a copper myself," he told Bobbie. "Roundsmen for ten years. Then I started doin' a little private investigatin' on the side. Right off, I discovered that detective work was my forte"—he pronounced it forty—"and gradually I built up my present business. Got a nice cli-

entele, too. I'll tell you one thing though, Miss Saunders, the police don't always pull right with the private detective agencies in a big city like New York. Jealousy, I guess. Professional jealousy."

"Yes, I'm sure it is," interposed Bobbie. "Sometimes I don't think the police really try to help. Only last month I tried to get a license to carry a revolver. A girl has to have some protection these days, you know. I didn't want to carry a big gun. Just a little pearl-handled revolver. And what do you think the police did?"

"I don't know, Bobs." It didn't take Jimmy Dull long to get acquainted with his lady "ops." "What did they do?"

"The mean things. They refused the license and told me to get a police whistle instead. The stupids! What good is a police whistle to a girl in a car on a lonely road eighty miles from nowhere?"

"Gee, can you bend that?" exclaimed Marilynne.

"Say, Bobs," Jimmy was suddenly all business, "I got a case you can start in on tomorrow. There's two thousand smackers in it for you, if you can pull it off."

"Oh!" said Bobbie, her breath taken away by the vision of two thousand dollars coming to her in a lump sum.

"One of my lady clients—" began Jimmy, leaning far over the table and muffling his deep voice—"is lookin' for a divorce, with heavy alimony. You know what that means! Gotta' have statutory grounds and he's a pretty slick bird for his age, in spite of his money. He ain't comin' across with the statutory grounds, which you gotta have in New York. You know what constitutes statutory grounds, don't you?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Bobbie. She knew.

"O. K.," went on Jimmy. "Well, when there ain't no legal evidence of



infidelity on the party of the first part—the same bein' my client's husband in this case—it's up to us to invent some, ain't it?"

Bobbie said, of course it was!

"The slogan of the Dull Agency, Bobs"—continued the detective—"is, 'if you can't get anything on your husband, we can!' and I've had experience. There ain't no husband that can't be made to fall for some human unless he ain't human. Ain't the expert advice of the great French criminologists—I used to know some of them personally—find the woman? Sure it is! That's what I do! Find the woman and put her on the trail of these cold and cautious husbands. Ain't that right?"

It sounded right enough to Bobbie.

She waited in silence while James K. Dull swallowed a *demi-tasse* of black coffee at one tremendous gulp and carefully lit his post-prandial cigar.

"This client's husband that I got in mind"—Jimmy explained—"will fall for you. I was thinkin' of him when you came into my office with Maggie. Oh, boy, I can see him now when you do your stuff. Gettin' hot and cold—all goose-pimply. He'd go goofy over a kid like you. I can tell by them lips."

Bobby accepted this tribute calmly.

"You can have a lotta fun out of it," Jimmy went on encouragingly, "and there ain't no danger. Nothin' unpleasant can happen. You get him all steamed up, see. He says, 'Let's go somewheres.' You say, 'No!' Stall him off a little. Work him up good. Then you go with him, and you tip us off where. When the crucial moment arrives, so does James K. Dull of the Dull Detective Agency. Could anything be sweeter? You're there, he's there and we're there. The case complete. Our client has her evidence, her divorce and her alimony and everybody's happy."

Everybody except the husband thought Bobbie. But she didn't say anything.

"What do you say, Bobs? Are you game?" Jimmy smiled disarmingly.

"Of course, I am!" replied Bobbie. It sounded adventurous and after all two thousand dollars was a lot of money. Jimmy got up and shook hands with Bobbie to seal the bargain. . . .

The client's husband turned out to be Wilfred Bolsterly, a wealthy shoe manufacturer who apparently, through no fault of his own, had married a flaming widow whose sole purpose in matrimony had been to get hold of as much of the quiet Mr. Bolsterly's fortune as she was able to. She was a sensuous flamboyant creature—all body and no soul—and she was many years younger than the white-haired shoe manufacturer.

Yet, for all his years, Wilfred Bolsterly was a virile old badger and tenacious of life. Perhaps, in the beginning, his wife had anticipated inheriting his fortune, but as time wore on and Wilfred remained as spry as ever, she entertained other plans for annexing most of the Bolsterly millions.

The alimony route appeared feasible until she discovered what a persistently faithful and moral man Mr. Bolsterly was. Either that or he was very clever and failed consistently to fall for the women that his wife set openly upon his trail. In desperation, Mrs. Bolsterly sought the efficient professional services of Jimmy Dull, and he had promised that he would not fail her.

Wilfred Bolsterly was Bobbie's first case. The meeting was easily manipulated. She went to see him under the impression that he was looking for a private secretary. Somebody had told her—her mistake, of course. Awfully sorry. And the thing was done. She had met her man.

After that, it was comparatively easy. Bobbie had it. She exuded it all

over the place. And she was a lot nicer than any of the women his wife had ever introduced to him.

Bobbie was quite pleased with herself and her progress. She grew to like Daddy Bolsterly. It was quite a shock to her when Jimmy Dull called her up one morning and reminded her that the two thousand she was to get was for something specific, not just for enjoying herself with a gray-haired old moneybags.

"You're doin' fine so far, Bobs," he said, over the wire. "But the missus is gettin' impatient for action. How about this week-end? Can you pull it off this week-end?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Bobbie weakly and she hung up the receiver. "Oh, well, why get sentimental? It was a business proposition," she shrugged. Two thousand was two thousand—and a lot of money, anyway you looked at it.

Bobby made herself particularly seductive—and eminently desirable for the rest of the week. Daddy Bolsterly kissed her—held her right in his arms—tight against his thumping heart. He told her how sweet she was—how adorable—and at last, he proposed the thing she had been working for:

"Bobbie darling," he said, suddenly, "how about a party? Say a trip into the country for a couple of days? The country's wonderful, just now, you'd love it!"

"A couple of days—oh! Daddy, you're a bad boy!" Bobbie dropped her eyes coyly.

"Say yes, baby, that's a dear! I'll be good to you—awfully good!"

"I'm not that kind!" sighed Bobbie. "You ought to know that!"

"I know you're not, darling! But daddy loves you so!" he pleaded. . . . She was such a delectable little morsel. If only he didn't have to be so careful on account of that damned alimony-seeking wife of his! Oh, boy!

. . . "You'll never regret it, baby!" he added.

Bobbie remained silent, for she was thinking hard. She was wondering what daddy would say when Jimmy Dull arrived.

"You know, daddy thinks you're the dearest girl he ever met!" he went on.

"I hope you'll always think so!" There was a wistful tone to Bobbie's voice; then she suddenly slipped her hand in his. "I'll do it!" she smiled weakly, as daddy caught her in his arms. . . .

Bobbie and Daddy Bolsterly rolled along the Boston Post road at a lively clip early Friday evening. They were planning to stop overnight at the Holly Arms in Greenwich and they had had dinner in New York before starting.

Jimmy Dull, accompanied by one of his operatives and Mrs. Bolsterly, followed by train. Jimmy was elated. Everything was working out beautifully. The stage was set. The all-embracing tentacles of the Dull Detective Agency were closing around the unsuspecting Wilfred. It all depended on Bobbie now. Jimmy had confidence in her because he knew she wanted the money and he doubted if she could ever earn another two thousand dollars as easily. Which was grievously underestimating the lovely Bobbie's business acumen.

All the way, Bobbie had been revolving various profitmaking schemes in her little money-mad mind. The world owed her a living—and she was going to collect it. She didn't care from whom.

At the Holly Arms, one of those pretentious red brick hostelries with ivy growing over the walls, Daddy Bolsterly obtained a suite for himself and Bobbie. Bobbie sighed as she watched him sign, "*W. Bolsterly and wife*," in the register. As soon as they reached their rooms, Bobbie pleaded an indisposition.

"I'm awfully sorry, Daddums," she said, "but I don't feel well. Just tired, I guess. I'll take off these traveling

aren't worried about anything—or—afraid, are you, darling?"

"Silly Daddums!" Bobbie tried to



"Daddy, you've been framed"

togs and lie down in the other room. Maybe I'll feel better later."

"Dearest," Daddy said, alarm mingled with disguised disappointment in his tone, "I'm sorry you don't feel well. Tell Daddums what it is. You

smile. "Of course, I'm not afraid. I want to lie down a while and rest. And I want to be alone."

Bobbie went into the bedroom. She took her smart little blue suit off and put on a filmy *négligé*. Then she threw

herself full length across one of the twin beds. Her brain was whirling. She was getting a splitting headache. After all, she had to decide what she was going to do quickly. Jimmy would be here soon. She liked daddy, he was all right. It seemed a dirty trick to frame him. But two thousand was two thousand, after all! Besides, daddy did have an awful nerve. The old coot. He thought that she had really fallen for him. That he could have an affair with her—a nasty, sordid, cheap affair. What did he think she was?

She'd show him. He couldn't trifle with her. And at the same time, she'd warn him. That seemed the fair and logical thing to Bobbie.

"Daddy, oh, Daddy, come here a minute, will you?"

Wilfred stepped into the bedroom.

"Daddy," said Bobbie calmly, "I want five-thousand dollars—now."

Wilfred Bolsterly was stunned. "Why, Bobbie, darling," he began in his usual tone, "what a strange thing to ask for—now!" Then a light seemed to dawn on him. His eyes narrowed. "So that's your game, is it?" he sneered. "Just like the rest. I suppose if I give you the money, you'll be nice to me, huh?"

"Not quite like the rest, daddy." There was venom and bitterness in the way she said that. "With me, it's just a little different. If you give me the money—a cheque'll do, for I trust you—I'll go! If you don't I stay. Figure that one out, Daddums."

"And"—she added with a sly glance at the door—"if you're wise, you will make the cheque out right away, because they may be here any minute now."

"What—who?" Bolsterly was plainly puzzled.

"Why, your wife, of course—and Jimmy Dull. Daddy, you've been framed."

Wilfred burst into sudden rage. "You mean you double-crossed me.

That you told my wife, you—you dirty little cheater!"

"Daddy! Such language! I'm ashamed of you." Bobbie was tense with suppressed excitement, but she spoke as if she was acting a part in a well-rehearsed play. "I didn't double-cross you, you old fool. I warned you! Jimmy Dull is my boss—and of course if you don't think it's worth five thousand dollars to have me out of here when they come—"

Bolsterly dashed into the other room. There was an ominous knock on the door. Bolsterly looked into the bedroom through the open doorway. Bobbie was standing in front of a mirror, pulling the gossamer material of her *négligé* away from her snow-white throat, and arranging it with artistic abandon over her shoulders. The knock on the door was repeated.

Bobbie dashed in to Bolsterly. "Don't be stubborn—and stupid," she whispered. "Five grand isn't much. I can get dressed and out the window of the bedroom with my handbag in twenty seconds. There's a fire-escape outside. Or of course, Daddums, I can yell!" Bobbie cleared her throat.

"For the love of heaven, don't yell," hissed Bolsterly. "I'll give you the money."

This time the knock on the door was insistent. "Who is it?" called Bolsterly, opening his cheque-book while Bobbie hurriedly pulled her clothes on and stuffed the *négligé* into her handbag.

"Telegram for Mr. Bolsterly," said a gruff and evidently impatient voice. It was a firm deep voice—a voice that no messenger boy ever owned.

Wilfred handed Bobbie his cheque for five thousand dollars. "I need carfare, too, Daddums," said Bobbie demurely, as she folded the cheque and clutched it in her hand.

"Don't call me 'daddums,'" snapped Bolsterly. He drew a roll of

bills from his pocket and peeled off three "tens" before Bobbie said "Thank you," and picked up her handbag. She clambered as noiselessly as possible out on to the fire-escape. Bolsterly watched her climb down the iron ladders. When she reached the bottom ladder, he saw her throw her bag to the sidewalk and jump the intervening space to safety. He saw her scurry up a side street. Then he opened the door.

Jimmy Dull rushed into the room, shouting: "What's this? What's this? What's going on up here? I'm a police officer." Suddenly he stopped and stood open-mouthed in the centre of the room. Where was Bobbie? Other room probably. He motioned to his henchman to step inside, and he spoke to Mrs. Bolsterly.

"Come on, Joe. Search the other room," he barked. To Mrs. Bolsterly he said: "I'm sure, madam, I'd like to spare your feelin's in a delicate matter like this, but I'll have to ask you to step inside and be an eye-witness. It's a point of law, madam."

Mrs. Bolsterly stepped inside. "You wretch!" she hissed at her husband. "Thought I wouldn't catch you, didn't you. Got you this time, though." And she, too, began a search for the "other woman" who should have been there—and wasn't.

Wilfred Bolsterly watched the intruders and smiled. With every moment of their increasing consternation and discomfiture, he was regretting his cheque to Bobbie, less and less. She wasn't such a bad kid after all. He said nothing.

Jimmy was puzzled. Why didn't Bobbie show up? Where had she gone? He stormed through the rooms of the suite cursing her under his

breath. Guess, she weakened at the showdown, he thought. No more inexperienced "ops" for him. They weren't cool enough—or smart enough for the racket. Suddenly, he wheeled on Bolsterly; he'd see what some bullying could do.

"Where have you got that woman hid?" he thundered, sticking his massive jaw close to Wilfred's smooth-shaven face. "We know you got one. No use stallin'."

"My good man," Wilfred's tone was patronizing, "I assure you, you are mistaken. I am occupying this suite alone—quite alone."

Jimmy Dull played his ace.

"Is that so?" he demanded with an ugly snarl. "Well, we've got the evidence. Right from the hotel register. If you're so sure you're alone maybe—just maybe—you kin explain how you came to register as '*W. Bolsterly and wife.*' Laugh that one off."

"The evidence to the contrary," said Bolsterly solemnly, "I still maintain that I am alone in this suite—and that this—er, raid is an outrage. A damned outrage!"

"Yeh! Well, just explain that '*W. Bolsterly and wife.*' Try and explain it. You don't deny writin' it, do you?"

"No, of course not!" said Wilfred, smiling in the direction of his irate wife. "I engaged this suite—although I must say it seems a rather personal matter to discuss with strangers—and registered for myself and wife, because, to tell you the truth, I have been expecting Mrs. Bolsterly to call on me for some time. And you can see for yourself that she is here. She has not disappointed me, have you, dear?"

Jimmy Dull slammed the door viciously on his way out.



# The Wanted Woman

By OLIVER SCOTT



*Under the stars*

**F**OR the first time in all his gay, careless, capricious, thirty-odd years of existence, Richard Sayre was frightened; terribly frightened—not for himself, but for the girl who faced him so valiantly. Because it was what might have been expected—and wasn't, at least, by him, it came like a sudden blow in the face. After three years, he had felt so safe, so sure.

If only he cared less—if it had only been a matter of indifference—and money; if only he did not love so tenderly, so protectively, he would have laughed; but there was no laughing now. All the latent decency and sincer-

ity and truth, that was really part of him, sprang into life. At all cost, the beloved must be protected! But how?

"But darling, darling," he said, "it can't be!"

"But it is, Dick—and I'm so glad, happy, proud!" . . .

But this story really begins when Abner Sayre brought his eight-year-old son, Richard, to meet his namesake.

The older Richard, the rich man, kindly, benign, interested, patted the lad on his dark hair and lifted him on to his knee.

"Fine lad, Abner," he said, looking up at his rugged kinsman, lean and gnarled, his brown hands knotted with the hard work on a rather thankless farm. "I'm proud and honored to have such a fine lad bear my name—it'll be safe with him. You know I, too, have a Richard, junior—Dickie, his mother calls him. He's fair, like her people. Your lad's all Sayre. I like that. You two come on home and have lunch with us."

They had left the mills, that were owned by Richard Sayre, senior, and had gone to the big white house and young Richard had met his cousin, the little fair-haired Dick. When they were ready to leave, Richard Sayre had said:

"When the boy's sixteen, Abner, you bring him to me. I will see he goes to prep school and to college along with my Dick."

The men had shaken hands on it and the two, father and son, had departed, Richard's hot little hand in the hard one of his father. He was a quiet boy and didn't say much, but he always remembered what his namesake had promised. It gave him the courage, as the years passed, to study hard, far into the night, after the chores on the farm, that fell to his lot, were finished. Life was a serious proposition for the Abner Sayres on the rock-bound farm, and the boy fought that he might get away from it. . . .

Abner had been dead for two years, and Richard was almost seventeen, when he presented himself to Richard Sayre, senior. There was a fear in his heart that the older man might have forgotten, but he hadn't, and young Richard took his place in the big house along with Dick. They went to prep school, came home for the holidays, had a tutor, and finally, together, went to Princeton. Life was

pleasant and easy for the farm-boy.

A deep friendship and an abiding love sprang up between these two, so different. Richard, although a year the younger, had a protective feeling toward the gay and volatile Dick. He owed his cousins so much and he longed to repay his debt. He adored the father, loved the son like a brother; he saved the boy many a time from the consequences of his gay, thoughtless escapades.

Youth passes quickly, and when the school days were over, the young men came back to town to take their places in the mills. Richard, because he insisted, started at the bottom to work up; Dick going into the office to work beside his father.

The senior Sayre was one of those wise, quiet men; he knew the two boys, he had made a careful study of their character. He trusted Richard; the boy was a Sayre, honest, dependable, finely natured. Dick, all youth and gaiety and irresponsible. When his father noted his son's extraordinary good looks, the blond curls, the expressive violet eyes, the red, somewhat sensual mouth, he sighed. He knew the temptations that would beset the boy, with his looks and money. He knew that Dick was the type that women would adore and spoil.

Many and varied had been Dick's experiences among the fair sex, but it was not until Juliette Marston came home, after three years in Europe, that anything serious came into his life. It was a strange thing, this infatuation—for it was only that—for Julie. He had known the girl all his life—and she had not made the slightest impression upon him; but now, older, sophisticated, her beauty enhanced, he suddenly became enamored. There was no doubt that Julie was the aggressor; perhaps even the stronger. And Julie wanted an immediate marriage.

When Dick approached his father it was in rather a subdued manner.

"Dad," he said, "Julie and I—well, we're going to be married." Then he added hastily: "Of course, if you've no objection."

His father looked at him steadily: "I've always said I'd never interfere when the time came and you wanted marriage. I'm not going to. But I do want you to think the matter over seriously. I like Julie—of course, I do. I've known her all her life—her father is my friend. But—knowing Julie—it strikes me that she is masterful, selfish, wants her own way—you do too, for that matter; however, Julie will not only want it, but insist upon having it, and her way won't always be yours. You won't like that! Marriage is a serious proposition, remember. Besides, you're so young—I was years older when I married."

"Yes, dad, I know all that. But you were poor; you waited until the mill was on its feet. You didn't have a rich father—I have!"

At that, his father smiled grimly: "That's all right, Dickie; but my money's mine—not yours, yet! I'm not going to stand in your way, but remember that I respect marriage—and I know that marriage isn't always respected today. Marry Julie if you love her, but there's this, your marriage is strictly up to you; if you marry her you've got to live with her. There'll be no divorces in my family, if I can prevent it. If you two separate, I'll cut off your allowance, and you'll have to leave my employ and go it alone—hustle for yourself."

Of course, it ended in Dick having his own way—and marrying Julie, with Richard as best man, while his father looked on praying for happiness for his son, while vaguely worried. He was afraid for these two high-strung, selfish children.

The two went to Europe honeymooning, and when they returned, Dick's father had another disappointment to face. He had hoped to have his son work beside him always, but

Julie was difficult. She wanted to live in New York; said she was tired of the small town and finally made things so unpleasant and pouted so much that, at last, his father gave Dick charge of the New York office, while Richard was given the position of general manager. The older Richard missed his boy, but there grew up between him and his namesake a firm devotion; the younger Richard, serious, understanding; the older man, kind and rather wistful, grateful for the understanding of the younger. . . .

Julie went into society, made a splurge, and found her life full. Dick, too, was busy; busy at the office, and after. As the years passed, Dick came to understand that his father had been right. Julie was selfish, masterful; insisted upon doing things her way. Why, he even came to doubt that he had ever loved her—he surely didn't now; even her beauty leaving him cold. So he came to find joy in many little lights o' love—naughty little gay girls.

It was when they had been married five years that on one of Dick's visits home alone, his father said:

"I want a grandson, Dick! It's time now, son."

Dick threw back his head and laughed: "You'll have to talk to Julie, dad. I have—I'd like a kid—but it's no go!" He said it rather wistfully. "No kids in our family, dad!"

It was then, perhaps, that the father turned his thoughts to his namesake. Through Richard his name would live on. . . .

It was when his father died and his will had been read, that Dick came to understand how much his father had taken to heart the fact that he had no grandson. The will showed that plainly.

After various large sums had been given to charities, the mills and the huge income was to go to Dick, but only for his life and as long as he lived with Julie. If he left no off-



spring, they were to go to the child of Richard Sayre, third, who bore his name. In the event of a divorce or separation, Dick was to have only a yearly allowance of five thousand, outside his salary; and Julie the same. To Richard was left the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars and the big house as a gift outright, and he was to have full charge of the mills, because "he had earned it."

Julie pouted, but Dick didn't much care. He was reconciled to the fact that Julie would bear him no children. But when she insinuated that Richard had influenced his father against them, Dick turned on her:

"Lay off Richard!" he almost shouted. "Richard's a man—my best pal and blood brother! He's almost too damn decent! You knew how father felt; I told you years ago. But you're so damn selfish you didn't want a kid! Anyway, what difference does it make to you?—you'll be dead!" . . .

It was that night, after the will had been read, that the two, almost brothers, sat in the library, that Richard said suddenly:

"It's up to you two, Dick, you and Julie. Have a couple of kids, that'll make you happy—much happier than squandering your lives just going about and getting nowhere."

"Don't I know it?" answered Dick sombrely. "But what's the use of talking—there's Julie—" his voice died away. Even to Richard he could not talk about his wife.

Then Richard said: "I don't want you to think that I'm sentimental, but now, I feel, is the time and the place to tell you how much I appreciated what the dear old senior did for me. I want to prove it, too! If the time ever comes when I can repay it to you—his son—count on me. I'm yours to command."

Richard reached out his hand and Dickie clasped it close.

"I know—I know!" he said solemnly. "I'm afraid I was always a disap-

pointment to dear old dad—but you—you were a blessing!"

Then Dick and Julie returned to New York to take up the old life. But now there was a difference; they were virtually separated, except for the fact that they occupied the same domicile. Julie went her own way and Dick his—and his was a very light-hearted and careless way. Pretty little ladies intrigued him and were intrigued. He was not only a gorgeous blond Narcissus, who made love delightfully, but he was generous, spending money with a lavish hand; besides he had an amazing sense of humor. Dickie liked to laugh.

It was at Van Loan's studio that he first met Carolyn Harvey. . . . He had dined with his latest innamorata, pretty little dancing Fifi Delmaine; after numerous cocktails, a couple of quarts of champagne and many liqueurs, the little Fifi had developed nerves and a temper. She had accused Dick of flirting with a luscious brunette, sitting opposite—whom, to be quite truthful, he had never even noticed—and had flung herself out of the restaurant in a rage. He had paid the bill leisurely and sauntered out to find that the adorable Fifi had gone home. Of course, Dickie knew she had meant him to follow her, but for once, he decided, she needed a lesson. So he had gone over to Van Loans and fallen into a festive party. When he entered he stood looking in at the dancers.

Directly opposite sat a girl, dark of hair. Her rose chiffon gown was decorous; high in the neck and long of sleeve. She leaned forward rather primly, her eyes on the gay, dancing crowd, and there was something that suggested loneliness in her attitude and in her eyes—among a crowd but not of it. Dickie crossed the room and sat down beside her.

"Hello, beautiful," he said, "you look lonely."

The girl looked at him with sombre

gray eyes. She was about to resent the easy familiarity, but she was under the Greek influence, at the moment, and she thought as she looked at him, that he was more like a Greek god than any man she had ever seen. She liked his length of limb, his grace, even in his evening clothes; she liked the way the blond hair grew away from the white forehead. He was handsome—and being handsome, she decided he must be noble and fine. So instead of frowning, she smiled at him.

"Oh, no, I'm not lonely!" she said in a cool, well-bred voice. "But I don't know anyone here, really."

"Well, you know me," he told her gaily; deciding that she was a pretty thing, after all. "My name's Sayre, Dickie Sayre—everyone knows me!" Then he stood up and held out his hand and they were dancing together, almost before she realized it.

It was sometime later, when he was feeding her sandwiches and plying her with champagne, that she told him about herself. She was an orphan; her father had left her a house in Easton and some money; not a great amount, to be sure, but enough. She had come to New York to study music.

"And go on the stage," Dickie had suggested. The girl had looked surprised, startled.

"Why, no!" she said. "I want to sing in a church choir."

Dickie had laughed long and heartily: "Church choir—that's priceless! Ye gods, what an ambition!" he cried, and laughed some more, and finally, from being vaguely annoyed, the girl came to laugh too.

By now, the party was getting gay and boisterous, and the girl seemed rather apprehensive; then Dickie said:

"Let's get out of here!" and the girl seemed rather more than willing. They had left and then were in Dickie's car riding up through the Park and out into the country. Under

the influence of a gorgeous moon, the quiet countryside, the many drinks, and Dick's charm, the little Carolyn forgot her timidity and told him of all her hopes and ambitions. To sing in church, to love and marry, to have children, to be a good wife and mother. . . .

With all Dick Sayre's charm and good looks, his *savoir faire*, his money, was it any wonder that Carolyn Harvey came to adore him? Besides, Dickie Sayre was rather wonderful; a splendid comrade, a fascinating companion, he gave the girl color and life, and their vivid imaginations matched. He had something to offer her at every moment, even when, as always with highly tensed people, he had his black moments. The time came when he took her in his arms, under the stars, lost in a storm of caresses, her heart pounding, every nerve quivering with emotion.

What matter that he was married? They loved—and she gave, feeling intensely in the giving. He was hers—she believed that; and for the first time, love went to the man's head. It was an emotional time for both, and for once, Dickie was deadly in earnest.

Not for Caro anything so mundane as an apartment in New York. Out of town, on the river, he found a lovely old house; it had stately halls, huge rooms, and was surrounded by an imposing garden. It was here he brought her. Here they were alone together, needing no one else. No more did the gay parties in town number among the guests Dick Sayre; no more did gay little light o' loves call him up on the telephone; no more did they interest him. Every moment he could spare was passed with Caro.

Julie asked no questions; she had long known of his philanderings. What matter another fair lady added to the long list? Even if she heard of it it would have made no difference. Julie had long since ceased to find her husband even amusing. All she asked

was that he turn up to her more important parties.

It was of more consequence to his boon companions who missed the gay comrade; but even they only laughed and said among themselves, "He'll be back—it won't last—it can't, not with Dickie!" . . .

But it did last—a surprising time. One year passed into history—two—and now the third year had come. . . .

Caro had bloomed into something very near beauty. Her mind had broadened, no longer was she prim, no longer did she dress like a little lost Puritan. Love had transformed the slim, childish figure into delicate curves; her gray eyes shone with a soft light—and she looked the fit mate for Dick Sayre.

She had longed for a child—longings that she kept to herself—but she decided that she was not to be so blessed, and although her heart had yearned, she had decided that perhaps it was for the best. . . . When it came it was something so surprising, so wonderful that her heart leaped in her throat. A child to bring her joy and peace! But when she thought of her lover it didn't seem so simple. What would he do—what would he say? She felt apprehensive!

She dressed herself carefully for his coming; made herself beautiful that her plea might be granted. And it was that night that she had told him, while his arms held her, his eyes looked into hers. But it was as she had feared!

"No—no! It can't be!" he cried. "Darling—darling, you don't understand! It can't be!"

But it was! And for the first time in their association, he shut himself away from her and thought it out. . . . He wanted a child—he had all the usual man's desire for a son, but divorce was out of the question. He knew Julie. He, himself, would be happy to make any sacrifice—but Julie! Why, Julie would laugh at the very

suggestion. He thought of his father! Thought of his father's will—thought of Richard whose first-born would be the heir! . . . In the dark hours of the night a solution came to him—but even to his fevered imagination it seemed wild and fantastic. But why fantastic? It must be! Richard would stand by—good old Richard!

Suddenly he took the receiver off the hook of the telephone and called up Richard on long distance:

"Rich, Rich, old man," he said, and his voice trembled, "can you get the midnight and meet me at my office tomorrow morning? . . . Important, terribly so. Can't talk over the phone, but come!" Richard promised he'd make it.

Then he sought Carolyn. "I have a solution, dearest," he told her. They talked long until the gray dawn came—the girl in tears; Dickie firm and decided.

"Trust me, oh, trust me," he begged her. "It will all come out right." . . .

When Richard Sayre met Dick the next morning, he was startled and a bit shocked. Never had he seen Dick so serious, so terribly in earnest—and after a sleepless night of anxiety he looked almost ill.

Dick told his story; told it well, honestly; then he said: "You once told me that I could depend on you—said you owed a debt to my father's son. I am going to ask you to make good your words. You know Julie; you know how much good it would do to ask for a divorce, under the circumstances—under any circumstances. She'd laugh! I want my child—if it's a boy to bear my name legally, Richard Sayre! It's your name too—make it possible for me!" Richard looked up quickly:

"You mean—?"

"I mean for you to marry the mother—allow her to divorce you afterwards!" He stopped suddenly—a strange look came in his eyes: "Think what it will mean to me—to the child! It will make him the heir!" He spoke

low—yet it struck on Richard's ears like a clarion.

A silence fell between them. Richard Sayre got up and stood looking out of the high window down to the narrow canyon-like street, where the many people passing looked to him like pygmies. So must we look to God, he thought. So small, so helpless—and yet in each beat a heart—a desire to do the right! He thought of all the things he had planned for himself: a happy marriage — children! But what did it matter?—what did anything matter? He thought of the kindly old man whose name he bore—dead and gone! He turned:

"I'm yours to command, Dick," he said, and held out his hand. For a moment they stood hands clasped, eye to eye.

"It's all right with you, Rich?" Dick asked. "There are no ties? I've just thought of that."

"No," Richard assured him, "there are no ties!"

"Then let's go!" said Dick. . . .

As they sped up Riverside, there were few words between them; each was busy with his own thoughts. . . . Richard found himself wondering about this woman he had never seen and yet was to marry within a few hours. He prayed that she might not be just common and ordinary. He feared—and yet how could she be? She had held the light, fickle Dick for three years! But whatever came, his word was given. Dick could always depend on him!

Almost before he was aware they had come so far, Dick drove into a drive and up under a porte-cochère. They entered a large hall and in the library, Dick left him. Richard looked about; it was charming and homelike; a fire burned in the fireplace and there were comfortable chairs about, and books and magazines and flowers. The room looked lived in; he liked that. Over the mantel hung a painting of a woman; he got up and stood be-

fore it. It was a lovely and gracious face, he decided; the eyes, honest, candid and steadfast; the mouth cool and winsome. The artist had caught the elusive charm of his model. A good woman, Richard thought. . . .

But upstairs, Dick was not having it easy. Now, face to face with it, Caro rebelled:

"No—no!" she cried. "I can't go through with it—I love you! I'm not ashamed of our love, nor of our life together! I can protect our child—"

"But can you—can I? It's the child that matters, after all! I want my child to bear my name—and you must want that too! After all, in the last analysis, you and I don't count—it's the child!" he told her sternly.

It took many words on Dick's part and there were many tears shed by Carolyn before he could finally persuade her. Then they went down the stairs, hand in hand. When Richard looked up it was into the steadfast eyes of the lady of the painting; lovelier, more delicate, perhaps, but quite as beautiful. He was glad.

"This is Caro," Dick said, and Richard took her hands in both of his.

"It is all settled then," he said, matter-of-factly, in order to save the girl pain and embarrassment. "I am glad to be of service to both of you—and I am glad to lend you my name," he told Caro. "But first, I'm going to make a request, in my turn." Dick looked worried, but Richard went on quickly: "All I ask is that as long as Carolyn bears my name, she will respect it. That she comes with me and lives in the Sayre house until her time comes and for three months after. Then I will assist her in every way to get a divorce. In those months I will treat her in every respect as though she were your wife, Dick. She'll be safe with me."

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that! Not to be with Dick!" Caro wide-eyed, holding back the tears by main force, cried.

But Dick spoke up quickly: "Richard is right, Caro darling. It will protect the child—and the time will pass and bring us together again!" . . .

It was so that Carolyn Sayre came to the big house, where Dick had been born, to wait!

Time passes, no matter how great the parting and the pain, and it passed for Caro. Richard was kind, thoughtful. He helped her to keep busy, talked about the coming child; kept her from brooding. She came to depend upon him, came to look forward to the hour when he would come home from the mill. He was so steady, so safe, so sure! Underneath his cold exterior she came to understand how warm the heart. At first, she counted the days when she would be with Dick again, but she came, more and more, to dwell on the coming child and less with her thoughts of Dick. She came to be glad that she could give the heritage of a fine old name to her offspring.

The ordeal came and after, with her little son in her arms, she forgot the pain. All was lost in the marvel of holding her child in her arms, close against her breast. And the baby was astonishing. She never wearied of watching it. Its soft blond hair, the lovely gray eyes, the delicate pink and white of its skin. Her baby—what magic in the thought!

Carolyn was purely the maternal type; her love for Dick—the better part of it had been just that. She was so wrapt in her care and love for the child that she rarely thought of the three months when she was to be free. Here she was safe, secure; her baby in its own home—the home of its fathers. And Richard had made it all so easy; coming home each night, kindly, aloof, admiring the small one.

The day came when Richard said suddenly: "The three months have almost past, Caro. But don't let that thought worry you—everything can

be easily arranged." His voice was gentle.

"I'm not worried about that, Richard. I only want what is best. And don't think that I'm not grateful—I realize now what you sacrificed. But when I think of Dick I wonder. He meant to do the right thing—but did he do it? Shouldn't he have shouldered the burden—instead of putting it off on you? I don't know. When I think of Dick I don't always see clearly." She sighed. "You see I love him. He's the father of my child. And too, I blame myself so bitterly."

"Don't think about things too seriously, Caro! At least, let us be thankful that everything has turned out so well." . . .

Before the three months came to an end, Richard went up to town. Dick greeted him, almost with gaiety.

"Soon now, Rich!" he cried.

"Yes, soon now, Dick," Richard said sombrely. "What are you going to do?"

"Do! What do you mean?"

"Just what I said, Dick. What are you going to do?"

"Why, I'm going to take a year's leave—it's coming to me and I'm going to take Caro and the baby far away!"

"Make the mother of your child your mistress!"

Dick threw up his hands. "What else can I do? Julie—Oh, what's the use of talking about that woman!"

"Go to her, offer her anything to set you free. There must be a way to force her hand."

"I've gone all over it. I've talked to my lawyers—they tell me there's nothing I can do! The fool woman's adamant!"

"Then give Caro up!" Richard said firmly.

Dick stared at him. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Give her up! Be honest—be decent! That's the right thing to do—

for her—for the child! Leave her where she is——”

A red flush spread over Dick's face as he threw back his head and laughed; a bitter, cynical laugh.

“So—so—” he cried—“you want her for yourself?”

Richard looked at him full in the eyes—there was contempt in his look: “Yes,” he said simply, “I want her—I love her! But she doesn't know it—doesn't dream of it. She dreams only of you! I want her more than I ever wanted anything, but I'm man enough to want only the good for her always. You blame me for coming to love her? How could I live in the same house with her—see her each day—know her real worth—her loyalty and truth, without coming to love her?” He flung out his hand: “But I swear that all I want is her good! If my death would bring you two together, honestly, legally, I'd go to my death—so help me God!”

Dick shrugged his shoulders: “Heroics! After all is said and done, you want me to step out—leave her to you!”

“I want you to be a man—a man worthy of your father!”

Dick Sayre got to his feet: “Damn you—damn you!” he said. “I was a fool—a fool!” Then he sat down abruptly and buried his face in his arm on the desk, and so Richard left him. . . .

It was that night that Dick knocked on Julie's door. She was already dressed for dinner and in her lovely gown and shimmering jewels, she looked very beautiful. But Dick was blind to it.

“I'm sorry,” he said, “but I've got to ask for a few moments.”

“Hurry then,” she said crossly, “I've a dinner engagement and very little time.”

“It won't take a moment, Julie,” he said, “but I want you to divorce me!” She would have interrupted, but he went on: “I'll be eternally grateful.

I'll give you my entire salary, all the property, retaining only for myself the five thousand a year Dad left me.”

Julie laughed cynically: “Want to marry one of your little inamoratas, I suppose.”

“Yes,” he said coldly, “I do want to marry. I want some of the good things of life that you have denied me. I'm ready to pay for it! I want love, a home, children!” Swift anger filled her.

“Well, you won't get them at my expense! Understand, here and now, once and for always, I'll never divorce you—nor will I allow you to divorce me! Never! Never! I'll be Mrs. Richard Sayre until the end of the chapter!” . . . .

It was two days later that Richard received a letter:

*“You were right, Richard, and I was wrong! And you must forgive me! I can't drag Caro down—I can't bear the thought. I've hurt her enough.*

*“I love her—and shall always! Love her enough to give her up! . . . As you suggested, I tried out Julie—offered her everything but it was no go—nothing would move her! . . . So you must hold Caro—care for her—love her! I leave her to you—I trust her with you.*

*“I have already made plans to join the R.A.F. They need men, those brave people, and I must do something or I'll go mad—something worthwhile. If I don't come back—well, time softens all things.*

*“Will you tell Caro; tell her how much I love her—tell her it is for always—my love!*

*“I am trying to be worthy of Dad, Richard.”*

That was all—yet Richard knew the heartache, the longing, the pain and despair, underlying each word.

After dinner that night, Richard, without a word, handed the letter to Caro. He felt the letter would tell its

own tale. She took it, read it with widening eyes.

"Oh—oh!" she cried. "How could he? To leave us—his child—and throw me a sop, he loves me, will love me always!"

"It was the most unselfish thing Dick ever did, Caro," Richard told her. "How could he drag you down—loving you, respecting you?"

"But how about you? Is it fair to you? Does he think I'll sit tamely by and let him put the burden on you?" She sprang to her feet. "I'm going now to take my child and go to my own home! I have a home, you know, and money enough to get along on! If he hasn't a thought of you, I have!" Richard stood up beside her.

"Caro, Caro," he said slowly, "don't—don't belittle this great sacrifice Dick has made for you—because he loves you! As for me, anything I have ever done for you has

given me a great happiness—I love you too, Caro! I ask nothing only that you stay here—let me make the path easy for you! Anything I've done is so little beside Dick's renunciation. Oh, my dear, you wouldn't—you couldn't—take up the old life again! And Julie—Julie would always stand in your way. For the child's sake it would be impossible." Caro stood quite still, staring at him:

"You love me?" she said, almost curiously.

"I love you, Caro! But I want only your good. Stay here—stay in your child's home. I ask nothing——"

Caro sat down suddenly; her eyes were full of tears: "Yes," she said, "I must think of the child! But you two—you and Dick—to love me! I must be very good, very gentle, make myself worthy." She reached out her hand and Richard took it and kissed it softly.

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## SAFETY FIRST!

*By Florence Jameson*

A great king passed, and straightway flew

Right up to heaven through the blue.

But when he arrived at the pearly gate,

He found he was just a minute too late.

For, instead of the portals opening wide,

They were locked, and St. Peter stood inside.

His Majesty wore an angry frown,

In fact His Majesty's foot was down!

"Open," he cried, "I am the king!

My passport I have, and my signet ring!"

But St. Peter sobbed, and shook his head,

"You cannot get in, oh king," he said . . .

Then a wonderful thought illumined his mind,

And he flew away on the wings of the wind,

But soon returned with an airy grace,

And said—with a smile on his angel face—

"Now, Sire, come in with me and sup,

For I've locked those five foolish virgins up!"



*They met in the bar*

## Linda Gets a Job

By WENDELL WOOD

**W**HEN the Schuman brothers first launched "The Lady in Pink," it looked as if the musical production was due to sail into Times Square and drop anchor for a long run. However, the mélange of

mirth, music and maidens had struck the iceberg of public indifference and, with every seam open, had sunk like a stone. Six weeks of tough rehearsals, one week of one-night stands together with the ice-water dashed



upon each of her fondest hopes and expectations made little Linda Leslie, once the pavements of Longacre were safe under her feet again, decide that while life was real and earnest, it was also a pretty severe proposition. It had given her considerable pushing around, and once she started the old routine of job-hunting, she was bright enough to see that before she was finished she was in for a cuffing.

To begin with, it was that particular season of the year when the grand moguls of theatredom had finished both closing winter shows and opening summer shows. The dog-days had set in on Broadway, and with the exception of wire-haired terriers, Linda didn't like dogs at all. Everywhere along the White Way there were scenes of inactivity in the sanctums of the big boys. Everywhere the fatal two words, engraved so indelibly on her memory, rang in her ears: "*Nothing today!*" Linda figured out that the high cost of perfectly good shoe-leather was making serious inroads on the few dollars she had saved from the wreckage of the Schuman brothers' prize flop.

She had rented a room that was a steal from a telephone booth on the top floor of a rooming establishment conducted by one Mother McCann, a lady with no maternal instincts whatever. The closet set Linda back four singles a week, and she didn't need pencil and paper to jot down the fact that by the first day of the following month she would be out of lodgings, miserable though they were, if she was still out of a job. Three nights of sleepless worry made her decide that temporarily, at least, she would turn her back on the gaudy sham of the showshop and seek pastures new, in which she might gather the green. When she came to this decision, she turned over and slept.

Yet, the next few days told her that the watchword of Broadway had

extended to the busy commercial sections of the metropolis. At least two million girls seemed out of employment. Linda squandered three cents each morning for the daily dirt, went through the *Help Wanted—Female* section like a moth through a set of sables, and then started for a round of interviews. In most cases she was just too late. The way the fortunate girls copped the jobs made Linda suspect they bribed the night watchman of the tall office buildings, slept there all night and were ready to pop out on the guy who did the hiring and firing the minute he blew in the following morning. Another thing that was stacked up against her was the fact that she knew less than nothing about commercial routine. Linda couldn't run a typewriter or an adding machine, to her a file was something that she used on her nails, dictation was what a stage manager handed a troupe of chorines, and bookkeeping was a bigger mystery than a Sherlock Holmes story. She got wise to this after riding in half a hundred beautiful elevators.

The humble portfolio of telephone girl seemed to strike her as being just about right. She assured herself that she had plenty of experience in that line. Making dates with Johns and freezing married men over the wire had made her well acquainted with the Bell System. Still, she didn't know how to chauffeur a switchboard, and while it looked easy enough, no one seemed to care to take the time to teach her the general art of plug-swinging. So Linda went on a still hunt for model jobs. If her feet and youthful beauty had worked for her, she wondered why her perfect thirty-two couldn't do as much. From back-stage gossip she had a hazy notion that the life of a cloak-and-suit model was one continual round of swing, jewelry, jay-walkers and Jersey deacons. Cloak models rolled around in luxurious motors, men shot

each other for their smiles, and it was distinctly the only life. In the fur and woollen district Linda discovered there was undoubtedly a measure of truth in her belief, for the model season was going full blast and jobs were as scarce as drinks. A couple of merchants with an eye for well-turned ankles and pretty faces had promised to see what they could do about it, but beyond taking her name, her time and holding her hand, nothing had come of it.

Meanwhile, as stealthily as a red-eyed Nemesis, the first of the month drew nearer and nearer and closer and closer. Every time Linda passed Mother McCann in the hallway of the boarding-house and caught the woman's basilisk stare, she shuddered unpleasantly.

One morning, two days before the old month checked out and the new came in, Linda had her matutinal entourage in her usual Sixth Avenue armchair lunch-room, one eye on her mocha and java and the other on the job column. Outside, the summer day lay bright and shining, but its cheer awoke no stirring within her heart. The same old list of impossible situations seemed to step directly out of the newspaper and smack on the end of her fascinating, tip-tilted little nose. Accountants, bookkeepers, filing clerks, stenographers—Linda sighed and was about to discard the sheet entirely when tucked away down at the end of the W's, she caught a glimpse of a discreet little advertisement that made her purse her petal-red lips speculatively. It read, briefly enough:

"Wanted: Prepossessing young lady for confidential mission. Excellent remuneration. Room 802. Hotel Selwyn."

Linda read the advertisement through twice, her eyes cloudy and her lips still pursed. The cheerful clatter of crockery being washed somewhere in the rear of the café assumed a thin, far-away note. She lift-

ed her gaze to an opposite mirror, wondering if by any chance she fulfilled the meaning of the word "prepossessing." Several things were strikingly apparent. She had quantities of red-gold hair, the piquant oval of a face that was certainly her fortune. Her dreamy eyes were as blue as summer seas and peered out at the knock-kneed world through a barricade of long lashes that made demure shadows on her smooth cheeks. Her mouth was a scarlet patch, moist and tempting. Her figure, through the medium of hard exercise, showed not an ounce of what the beauty-doctors termed a surplus *avoir-dupois*, and while no one could possibly mistake her for a boy in a bathing suit, she was dowered with the feminine glamour of triumphant youth standing at the pearly gates of maturity.

More important, to properly enhance her intriguing charms, Linda had accepted, in lieu of a final week's salary from the scuttled show, a trunk containing four of the costumes she had worn in the production. Two were bewitching evening gowns of the sort guaranteed to remove all somnolence from any tired business man. The third creation was an afternoon frock that Linda had worn in a second-act scene, and the remaining sample of dressmaking art was the cute and breezy tweed sport suit that clothed her.

Altogether, if she didn't have to sell or pawn the wardrobe, she decided she could look like a million dollars on a minute's notice and that was more than something in the bustling City of Bluff.

Consuming the last of her muddy beverage, Linda tore out the advertisement, tucked it away in her near-leather handbag and left the lunch-room. The Hotel Selwyn, as she had reason to know, was a modern hostelry in the vicinity of Fifty-ninth Street and the Avenue. She shaped a course uptown, speculating on what

might or might not come of the thing.

The hour lacked several minutes of ten o'clock, and while there was a chance that some other prepossessing young lady had already grabbed the gravy, she determined to look into it and kept her fingers crossed all the way to the Plaza. Presently, the ornate lobby of the Hotel Selwyn received her. She spoke charmingly to the desk clerk, and was rewarded with immediate service:

"Oh, you want to see Mr. Porter? He's the one who put that advertisement in the paper. Ask the operator to telephone upstairs. The switchboard is to the left of the writing-room. No trouble at all. Lovely day, is it not?"

He resumed the task of winding his wrist-watch, while Linda, fresh hope flowering within her, followed directions. Evidently the position was still wide open. The Venus of the trunk lines heard what she had to say, did her stuff languidly and raised a face that might have been rouged more discreetly.

"Mr. Porter says you should go right up. Room 802. We hide the elevators around in the foyer, and don't let them blots get personal, dearie."

With a tingle of excitement beginning to warm her, Linda stepped into a lift that seemed to bounce up a half-dozen floors in one leap. She emerged on the eighth-story corridor, sought and found Room 802 and, a little dubiously, pressed the pearl circle of its bell. Vague doubts assailed her for an instant. There were men who advertised for nefarious purposes, men who used artful traps to snare innocents. Linda shrugged. Any girl, she told herself, who could survive six weeks of musical-comedy rehearsals could take care of herself in *any* predicament. Besides, Broadway had given her a graduating diploma from the hard and bitter school of experience. If she couldn't take care of herself, neither could the local Police

Commissioner. Funny stuff and monkey business were a pair of things that would never get rosy with her.

An interim elapsed, and the door was opened by a man so smug and obsequious that Linda guessed immediately he was the house valet. This person considered her gravely before ushering her into what she saw was the living-room of a small suite.

"Mr. Porter is at his shaving, Miss. He says you are to have a chair and make yourself comfortable."

Linda picked out a Coggswell.

"Then the job isn't filled yet, Wallace?"

The man coughed.

"Begging your pardon, but my name is Edward, Miss. The situation is still open. There were several young ladies who called earlier, but as Mr. Porter was still abed, I requested them to come back this afternoon. Will you pardon me, please?"

"You'll have to ask the governor of the state to do that," Linda returned pertly.

The man's footfalls died away and the quiet was broken only by the growling voice of the city, muted and indistinct. Linda looked around with some interest. Although the room was a part of a hotel suite, it was furnished somewhat in the manner of a private apartment and betrayed personal touches. A jar of some bright, yellow-colored flowers nodded on the top of a bookcase and a combined victrola-radio cabinet held, besides a hammered brass ash-tray and a nickel-plated cocktail-shaker, a round silver frame containing a photograph. Linda pulled herself together and walked around. The photograph was that of a girl or woman whose bold and brazen beauty seemed to leap from behind the glass and strike her directly between the optics.

Linda took note of the other's languorous smile, slumberous eyes and half-mocking expression. She was, evidently a dusky brunette and probably

a professional person, for Linda, even though she had kissed the stage good-bye, was able to detect a footlight broad when she saw one. Across the bottom of the picture was an inscription, written in violet ink: "*To my Adorable Man—from his Devoted Pam.*" Linda had just finished reading the words when a door opened somewhere and she made haste to beat a retreat back to her chair.

Followed a pause, and then the Mr. Porter whose advertisement had intrigued her in the one-armed café entered. Youthful, evidently in the early or mid-twenties, the owner of the suite was a blond giant with a pink-and-white complexion, the blue eyes of a guileless infant, a chin as weak as a glass of water and hair that an ordinary chorus girl would have given a finger for. His bathrobe and the Japanese straw slippers failed to conceal his breeding and polish. Indubitably, Linda concluded, Porter was a big little rich boy.

She removed her fascinated gaze from his bathrobe and watched him hunt up a cigarette. He lighted it leisurely, inhaled and turned to her.

"Frightfully unconventional—appearing in this outfit and all that sort of thing. Edward, my man, has been shooing girls away since the dawning hour this morning. Remarkable what action a little advertisement will bring! Must be thousands—no millions of girls seeking employment, what? Queer?"

He looked her over with his blue eyes, nodded once or twice and ventured to ask her name. Linda supplied it, recognized the fact that the overgrown man before her was suffering from a slight case of embarrassment and promptly supplied more details concerning her qualifications. She recited the distressing facts of the demise of "*The Lady in Pink*," gave him her age, nationality, religion and other data that explained herself fully. Never one to beat around bushes or

to impersonate a shrinking violet, Linda dealt the dirt with a deft hand. According to her own admission, she was capable of any adventure, admitted knowing more about nerve than twelve dentists, spoke of her marvelous wardrobe and broke the news of each of her separate talents. She could sing, she was a better dancer than St. Vitus, her repartee was wicked and her sense of humor sublime.

"And not only all that," she wound up breathlessly, "but I merely ask a fair and living wage."

Porter—he had introduced himself as Macklin Porter—nodded in a dazed manner. He blinked the eyes he kept steadfastly riveted to her, dipped his cigarette ash into the beaten-brass tray, scratched one red ear and coughed.

"Come to think of it," he stated, "I think you're the very girl I had in mind when I got Edward to write that advertisement. Curious. Now I tell you what; overslept this morning and I have a dashed important appointment for ten. With my tailors, you know. Then this afternoon—I'll have to ask Edward."

He touched a bell, and the smug gentleman who looked like a house valet entered, was quizzed and made prompt response:

"You're lunching with your mother, sir. At two o'clock you have an appointment with Sternberg, the attorney, and at three you promised Phelps, the antique dealer, you'd look in at his shop."

"Unimportant," Porter interrupted. "Blue Tilanese ware, that sort of rot. Phelps won't be offended if I stay away. Very good, Eddie. Suppose," he went on, when the man made his second exit, "I meet you somewhere and we'll talk this over? Never could do a subject justice in a bathrobe. Right?"

Linda looked at him dubiously:

"Yes, if you really want me for the

job. That is, don't let me believe that I've actually grabbed an honest-to-goodness job with real souvenirs from the Mint in it and then knock me for a goal by forgetting to keep the appointment."

A deeper wave of pink suffused Porter's cleanly shaven cheeks:

"My word! Only a blighter would do a thing like that, you know. Of course, the situation is yours—if you want it. I say, you know where the Club Trouville is?"

Linda nodded: "In a happier day my friends used to take me there."

"If convenient, I should like to meet you in the foyer at half-past three. Then I'll explain matters completely. Shall we call it a date?"

"You can call it a pound of them!" Linda replied with a smile. "Half-past three—foyer—Club Trouville. By the way, you're not hiring me to murder any one, are you?"

Macklin Porter shuddered. "Really, no!"

"Because," Linda added, turning to the door, "that's a little out of my line. At half-past three then, and—thank you"

When she arrived in the lobby again, it was to find a fresh detachment of the army of the feminine unemployed surrounding the switchboard operator. Instructions of some sort had trickled down the wire and into the rubber-clad ears of the young lady on duty, for as Linda went past, she heard the operator handing out information to those who besieged her:

"Listen, gals, and don't push! You're just too late. The advertiser has sent down word that the position is filled."

## II

**M**ACKLIN PORTER *en dishabille* in the morning and Macklin Porter at five forty-five in the afternoon were two distinct and separate beings. The patient Linda observed

this when, only fifteen minutes late, the one she awaited strolled into the mauve-and-tan lobby of the Club Trouville, a perfect boulevardier in some pretty wise scenery. His blue-serge suit, his panama hat, his brogans, his Malacca walking stick and his light gloves, to say nothing of his puffed cravat, were each a harmonious note in a sartorial grand opera.

"So sorry to have kept you waiting. Forgive me. I looked in on old Phelps, and he showed me a couple of Revolutionary pinch bottles. Authentic stuff, rather. I say, let's get Julius to supply us with a table and get to the business of the moment. What?"

"Them," Linda exclaimed, anticipation warming her, "are my sentiments."

It was a trifle too late for the usual afternoon crowd at the expensive and fashionable Trouville, but at least two dozen tables were occupied and the famous Trouville Five were making dance music for those who wished to bend an ankle. Julius, the king of all head waiters and an individual Linda hadn't seen since the night the big monied man, from points west in the country where men were men, had given a party to six front-line girls from the show at the Casino, led them to a discreet table in a far corner of the room and seated them. Another waiter supplied service with a capital S, Porter passed a handsome cigarette-case, and once a couple of balls appeared, opened fire:

"First of all," he began, "tell me this. Do you know Rand Carney, Mrs. Carney, Poker Face Carney or any of the other Carneys?"

"Only Chili," Linda assured him, searching her memory for clues.

"To go back and change the subject again," Porter continued, "ever hear of Pamela Payne? Miss Pamela Payne, I should say. Attractive brunette, wonderful figure, magnetic eyes as dark as a derby hat, passion-

ate lips, soft, white hands—that sort of thing? She used to be at a place called the Frivolity Roof.”

“I’ve heard of the Roof,” Linda assured him, frowning thoughtfully. “Let me see. Was Miss Payne in a *revue* up there entitled ‘Spice of Life’? I think it was about three years ago, just before the old roof garden was sold.”

The youth opposite her registered faint excitement.

“Yes, that’s the Pamela, positively! ‘Spice of Life.’ She sang that naughty number—what was the jolly name of it?—‘When Are You Coming Over?’ Well, well! We have established her identity at any rate. I suppose you know why she quit the stage.”

Linda delved into the archives of remembrance again.

“It seems to me that Pamela Payne quit the foots because she was engaged to be married to some wealthy rounder.”

There was a pause during which the melody of the Trouville Five intruded.

“I was the one she was engaged to,” Porter croaked. “Remarkable, what? Funny thing, if fate had its way, we would have probably been long since divorced. However, for one reason or another, we kept the engagement lengthening out, and love, infatuation, passion—whatever you want to call it—gradually died away. Mistake, these jolly long engagements, but in my case a happy mistake. We weren’t at all suited. She had her own ideas, and I had mine. Striking beauty and all that but a little negative in the line of intelligence. Broadway queen and toast of the town, that’s what Pam was. Eventually I gave her the facts straight from the shoulder. No earthly sense of wasting each other’s time. Told her plainly. She didn’t care a tinker’s curse for me and I didn’t give a sailor’s oath for her. No mincing matters. Brutal confession and all that

sort of thing. So ended the romance.”

Linda, who didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, looked askance at Porter. Once or twice during his narrative she had wondered if he were all there. To save herself, she could not figure in what way the advertisement in the morning newspaper linked her to the story of a frustrated engagement.

“Where do I come in?” she inquired.

The blond youth tinkled the ice moodily in his thin glass.

“I thought,” he went on dismally, “that when the beastly thing was ended, it was ended. Kept Pam’s picture for *auld lang syne*. As I say, thought the thing was dead and buried. Then, two weeks ago I got a letter from some lawyer chap who answers when you whistle to the name of Elias Sternberg. Frightfully independent and unpleasant sort of fellow, this Sternberg. Rather a Shylock, Jesse James, as it were. We had a talk together, and he broke the news. Either I settle for a huge sum of money or Pam entered suit for breach of promise.”

“I’ve heard of similar cases,” Linda cooed.

“Not similar to this one,” Porter resumed. “Usually they have love-letters, that sort of rubbish. Peculiar. So long as I knew Pam I never wrote her except to send her a Christmas card. Not much of a hand at the chirography thing. Why write when the telephone is so dashed convenient? Anyway, she only has one thing to base her suit on. One silly thing, but that is ample.”

“What’s that?”

“When I was in Paris, before the war,” Porter explained, “during the flush of the first month of our engagement, I went shopping around, here and there, in the dear old town. Custom in France to go shopping, you know. Bought her cartloads of stuff and had them shipped over. That

was all right. Then, one fatal day, while on the *Rue de Rivoli*, in a moment of weakness, I entered some jolly establishment to see about having some shirts made for myself. I didn't but I ordered something infinitely worse. That was a pair of pyjamas for Pamela, a pair of pale pink, see-right-through-them pyjamas with lace insertions, all that sort of thing. Bally things, but you haven't heard the worst yet. The woman who turned them out told me she was the most expert needlewoman in Paris, did wonderful embroidery and showed me samples of it. So I gave her a free hand, thought up a design on the impulse of the minute and let her go to it. Understand?"

"The plot," Linda observed, "is getting foggy. What sort of a design?"

"One that would explain my love," Porter said dolefully. "It was in the form of a hot verse. Something like yours forever—some fool stuff like that. Any rate in a few embroidered words, it told the wearer of the pyjamas how much I adored her and ended up with my signature beneath it in silken threads. Fancy!"

"And the pyjamas are taking the place of the usual correspondence?"

Porter inclined his blond head.

"Exactly. Not alone that, but this Sternberg reptile informs me they are much better than mere letters, for the reason that they will show any jury our intimacy and Pam's faith and confidence in me. Don't know, I'm sure. Might be a bluff, but I can't afford to take the chance. You see, I'm engaged myself again—this time to a Philadelphia girl—a Marion Wand. Frightfully strait-laced, perfectly proper, and I love her devotedly. It's the real thing this time. If I don't come across, Sternberg will start proceedings, ruin me and probably collect some amount of damages anyway. I have until the first of the month to decide whether or not I'll pay up and avoid the publicity or

don't pay and let him do the dirty work."

"You'd better pay in advance and keep it quiet," Linda murmured.

Porter shook his head.

"But the filthy bandit wants fifty thousand dollars cash, you know! Simply can't manage a sum like that. Mother is free-handed and generous, but I'd have to explain what I want the fifty thousand for, and I wouldn't get it anyway. So you see I'm in a bit of a predicament—*was* in a bit of a predicament until Edward suggested a plan, a way out."

He brooded heavily, while Linda, still running true to patience, saw that the Club Trouville was growing more populated. The triangular, highly polished dance-floor held a dozen shuffling couples. There were girls, overdressed and highly painted, girls with pale, frail hands who looked as if they had just escaped the nursery and had put on the costumes of a burlesque actress. Some were with youths who wore the extreme British fashions. You wondered how they'd escaped the draft. Some were with doddering old men, sensual old men whose loose mouths wore sinister grins. Watching them, Linda saw only one person in the whole throng who resembled a real man.

He sat under the shrouded windows, a cigarette between his fingers, and even from her table, Linda was sharply aware of his lean, handsome face and his laughing brown eyes that were only a shade darker than his sun-tan. She noticed the athletic breadth of his shoulders, the poise of his well-shaped head and his unobtrusive, conventional flannels. He sat alone, watching the dancers as she watched them, and as she stared at him, he raised his head, as if sensing the magnetic tug of her eyes, and stared back. To Linda it seemed as if an electrical spark had bridged the gap between them. She was only half conscious that her red lips had parted

and that an inner emotion filled her with some tremulous and nameless thrill.

With an effort, she gave Macklin Porter her attention, helping herself to a fresh cigarette from his case and letting him hold a light for her.

"Where," she asked again, "do I come in?"

Porter shook off a portion of his retrospective lethargy and straightened up.

"This week-end Carney is having some people down to his place—bally old place called Port Fortune. It's on Long Island. As I was saying, Carney wants me down with Marion, my fiancée. She—Marion, that is—is visiting relatives somewhere out in Pennsylvania, so the idea is impossible. Now pay close attention, and I'll show you how whimsical fate can be. Guess who else will be at Port Fortune?"

"That isn't as hard as a junior crossword puzzle," Linda smiled. "Pamela of the pyjamas?"

Porter's blue eyes glinted admiration.

"Jove! What a clever girl you are! Pamela, to be sure, but even that isn't all of it. Since parting Pam has gone and gotten herself another sweetheart—Wall Street chap by the name of Clifton Tennant. When this Elias Sternberg buzzard first began to heckle me, I put private detectives on Pam's trail. I hoped to get the goods on her, but only succeeded in getting a little information. This Clifton Tennant is worth all kinds of money—I mean, all kinds of good money, and Pam worships the dollar God. I'm sure, from what I've learned, that *he* doesn't know anything about the breach-of-promise suit, myself or the pyjamas. Remarkable. And Tennant, I've learned, will also be at Port Fortune."

"Sounds like a snappy three-act farce," Linda interpolated. "Still, I'm

forced to repeat. Where do I come in?"

Porter leaned confidentially forward.

"Look here, Miss Leslie. I'm going to take you down to Carney's place, and for the week-end you'll double as Marion Wand, my Philadelphia fiancée. No chance of any slip-up. I've seen Carney's guest list, and there's not a soul scheduled for Port Fortune who knows or has ever seen dear old Marion. It's as safe as a church, positively. Now then, your job is simply this: I'm hiring you to remove the cause for the contemplated breach-of-promise action. Recover Pamela's pyjamas, and you'll bring back the sunshine. I don't care in what manner you get the beastly things. Steal them! Do anything you want—but only get them! I'll pay you five hundred dollars for going down to Port Fortune, and I'll give you a bonus of another five hundred when you hand over the pyjamas!"

Linda's eyes widened. For a long minute she sat perfectly still, her pulses drumming agreeably. Five hundred dollars to keep a roof over her head, tilt with her appetite and buy new booties. One thousand dollars to hold her over Broadway's bad season and keep up her strength until the hard-hearted managers began to throw together new musical *mélanges* that would require a couple of dozen shapely maidens to lift their voices and feet in unison!

"One minute," she said almost harshly. "What, if anything, leads you to believe that the lady of the pyjamas will have 'em with her down there? If they're valuable enough to swing a breach-of-promise suit, isn't it likely that she'll have them tucked away in some safe-deposit vault?"

"Reasonable supposition," Porter informed her. "My very words when Edward first broke the idea. Learned such was not the case, however. Private detectives I hired bribed the



maid in the hotel where Pam stays in town. We found out that she takes the pyjamas with her wherever she goes, has a special compartment in her week-end bag for them and is evidently afraid to let them out of her sight. Don't worry! I paid high for my information, and it's real bonded stuff, you know. The pyjamas will be at Port Fortune. I'll guarantee that. There's your whole story, and now it's up to you. Want to take the sporting chance?"

"Crazy to!" Linda assured him. "I ought to make a pretty good pyjama crook. My last stage director said I was very quick at picking things up!"

"Corking!" Porter extended a hand and sealed the agreement with a shake. "So much for that. You're having dinner with me tomorrow night and we'll go into all the minor details. Meanwhile," he fumbled in his wallet, "here's two hundred and fifty on account. Might need it to buy a new hat or something, what? Anything else you want?"

With unsteady fingers Linda took the money, made sure no one was looking and tucked it away in her bag. Then she stood and answered his last query with a nod.

"Yes, one dance. It's so long since I've stepped around that I'm almost sure my insteps are rusty. Do you mind if we tear off a rhumba?"

"Delighted!"

It was long after seven o'clock when they left the Club Trouville. The youth who was sun-tanned and handsome had departed an hour earlier, but a recollection of him lingered within the folds of Linda's memory. It was not every day that a girl saw her ideal walking around, alive and breathing. She let Porter hand her into a taxi, promised to meet him the following night for further instructions in the gentle art of duplicity and went directly back to the boarding-house.

There, when Linda went in, she almost stumbled over Mother McCann in the main hallway. The landlady, who often claimed her heart was as big as Brooklyn, lifted a hand and touched her arm with her usual, "Lis'en, if you don't mind, darlint," but this time Linda beat her to it. Opening her bag, she peeled a couple of twenties off her newly acquired roll, crumpled them up and dropped them carelessly onto the woman's work-worn hand.

"I almost forgot, Mrs. McCann. I owe you for back room-rent. I'm so absent-minded!"

Up in her telephone-booth bedroom Linda pulled on the light, made sure that no one had walked off with her trunk since morning and sat down in a chair by the window that overlooked several backyards in which nearly all the cats in the world were assembled. Erratic thoughts of pyjamas, sun-tanned young men, a blond giant with blue eyes, house parties and week-ends galloped around the race-track of her imagination, until, after a very long time, she found one cigarette in her bag and kindled it.

"And they say," Linda told herself, "that you can't get a kick out of anything any more!"

### III

**P**ORT FORTUNE, the faithful reproduction of a stately English gentleman's country villa, sprawled over most of the acreage and confronted one of the little harbors indenting the north shore of Long Island at a point not far below Manhasset Bay. It had more grounds than restaurant coffee, a private landing-pier, beautiful bath-houses, a wharf with springboards and a strip of real beach. Somehow it reminded Linda of an Urban set. All that was necessary to complete the picture was four and twenty beautiful girls to trip in wear-

ing a similar number of eye-widening bathing suits and a little swing to accompany them.

A knock-out in the second of the costumes so irretrievably her own, Linda had come to Port Fortune as Miss Marion Wand from the aristocratic suburbs of Philadelphia. As Miss Marion Wand she had been received and ushered into a spacious chamber on the second floor. That was all right and so far was so good, but she didn't uncross her fingers. She was acting under instructions from Macklin Porter, and he had told her plainly that if she forgot herself and lapsed into the *patois* of Times Square she was as good as gone. So Linda, worried about her sidewalk patter, dressed for dinner Friday night in the spacious bedchamber where billowing about ninety-six dollars' worth of window drapery, a salt-spiced breeze from the twilight stretches of the Sound wandered in to cool the fever in her blood.

Adjoining the room was a bath that would have made anybody forget about Saturday night and go right to it. The tub was of gleaming porcelain with more dials and knobs than a twelve-tube radio receiving set. There were showers, an automatic bath-crystal chute, an electric heater to warm the towels, and a little scale to tell how Kid Diet was getting his stuff across. Linda, in a swirl of perfumed waters, had to force herself to arise from their amorous embrace.

Dripping, she manipulated towels as thick as a school-dunce, shook out the mist of the red-gold hair that emerged perfectly dry from the rubber cap the house supplied, and rubbed her slim young body until it glowed pinkly. She hated to wash tubs after her, but in this case an automatic air-and-water cleaner did the dirty work, and Linda, putting on her best and only bra', stepped into her step-ins, snapped the elastic and

pattered into the bedroom. A maid had been assigned her, but she had locked the door against the girl rather than have her eye her shabby lingerie. After she had coiffed her hair, she pulled on her stockings, rolled them below her dimpled knees, shot herself with the Cinderella slippers she had purchased out of her advance payment and put on the evening gown that brought back such cruel and bitter memories of the musical comedy flop that had been turned for a circle out there in the sticks.

The affair was a dream of chiffon and lace, and Linda was aware that she looked her prettiest in it. So she scorned the cheval mirror for everything save a glance at the careful amount of her make-up, and before the open window, pondered both her metamorphosis and the question of the business at hand.

Upon her arrival at Port Fortune Linda had seen no one and understood that Randolph Carney, the owner of the drum, together with his better half and a majority of those guests who had already arrived, had departed for the conclusion of some thrilling golf match over at a nearby course. Although she had met none of them, Linda was vividly aware that they had returned, for she heard the pant of motors on the driveway, laughter and conversation that floated up from below, footsteps in the halls and the slam of doors. At length she decided that she would go down, unlocked the door barred to her gift maid and found where they kept the stairs. Two or three men and a few women nodded amiably to her. They should because Linda as she made her entrance was something to see. Then she gained a foyer almost as large as the lobby of the Hotel Selwyn, crossed it and went into a lounge-room where, to her immediate relief, she discovered Macklin Porter, a blond symphony in a dinner coat, lounging on the end of a divan.

"*She's here!*" Porter croaked, once he had ceased gaping at her witlessly. "Just came in from the links and pretended to be frightfully friendly. She's gone up to dress. Of course, Carney don't know anything about matters and I'm to take my cue from her. Jove! You—why, you're perfectly ravishing in that creation, you know! Let's practice a bit before some one comes in. You Macklin me until you get the hang of it, and I'll Marion you until I'm glib about it. Right?"

At length, in anticipation of the approaching dinner-hour, the week-end guests began to crowd into the lounge-room. Linda found herself being introduced to more people in ten minutes than she had ever met in ten years. She was presented to Randolph Carney, who was fat, fifty and florid, who had hands like a groom and a face like a slapstick artist. She met Rosalie Carney, his ninety per cent better half and their son, Ted, alias Poker Face Carney. Linda didn't take to this last member at all. The card-playing son was evidently Porter's junior by a year or two. He was a black-visaged, wiry individual with a loose, sensual mouth and eyes in which was already hidden the mystery of sex, women and vice. There was a piratical swagger to him and a chill to the hand he gave Linda that made her think of touching an oyster. And she couldn't help but notice the vague half smile about his lips and the narrowing of his predatory eyes when the introduction was made.

"I'll have to watch that baby," she told herself. "I don't like his looks, and I think he has something up his sleeve besides the freckle near his elbow."

By the time a pompous butler announced that dinner was served in the Shearton dining-hall, Linda had met most of the others. There were a couple of busy broker boys who

tore the Stock Exchange apart with their bare hands, an elderly little rounder who "yessed" them continually and stretched out his ears in the hope of picking up a remunerative tip. There were some of the Park Avenue sub-debs, bored and blasé, a number of society matrons whose jewels would have ransomed a city, and some other nondescript wall-flowers who didn't know what it was all



*Linda was something to see*

about. Linda didn't bother to bestow any time or any attention upon them. Her big moment came when Porter knocked her down to the fascinating Pamela Payne, and it was her privilege to look over the one who was responsible for her presence here.

The late fiancée of young Macklin Porter had beauty more intense even than revealed in the photograph on the console of Porter's suite. Pamela Payne's beauty was the voluptuous, exotic and burning loveliness of a scarlet passion-flower. The woman—she was patently older than Porter—had hair that was blue-black, a skin as creamy as satin, eyes that were

enigmatic pools of haunted darkness, a nose classical in its design and lips that were moist madness. She was deep-bosomed and beautifully made, one in whom all the artifices of her sex had merged and melted. Whatever theatrical adventures had been hers had added Pamela Payne. Hints of them were in the hauteur of her manner, her contralto speech, the way she employed her graceful hands and used her expressive eyes. Linda knew she had been given the deadly up-and-down by the other and wondered if Pamela Payne saw in her the imposter.

"I doubt it," she assured herself. "She hasn't time to think of anything except her own looks and if she's getting plenty of attention."

It appeared that the fortunate—or unfortunate—Mr. Clifton Tennant had been kept in town by a business conference and was not coming down until later. Linda learned this news from Poker Face Carney, who, seated at her left, engaged her in conversation once the meal had started and the butler, stalking the candlelit shadows, had begun to pour the champagne.

"Somehow," Carney began confidentially, "I have a feeling that I've seen you somewhere before, Miss Wand. Remember ever having seen me anywhere?"

On guard, Linda shook her head slowly:

"No, I can't say that I have. Maybe it was in Philadelphia."

"Philadelphia — nothing. Sleepyville is the one town I don't play. I'm talking about New York. Usually, I've got a memory that hits on all six. Sooner or later, I'll remember. Won't give me any help?"

Linda shook her bright head, still on guard:

"Can't. Philadelphia is Philadelphia and New York is Manhattan Island. You imagine that you've seen

me somewhere before, Mr.—eh—Poker Face."

Linda was conscious of his inscrutable gaze drifting down the slope of her young bosom, and lingering on her arms and hands. Resolutely, she broke off the conversation and eyed the merry ladies and gentlemen who had places at the board. Macklin Porter was seated almost directly opposite her, up to the tips of his shiny ears in conversation with Randolph Carney's wife. Further down the board Pamela Payne held forth on the same side of the table, a reserved and silent enigma, although Linda felt the other's gaze straying across to her countless times. The yellow flames of the candles wavered, jewels sparkled and scintillated like a thousand flashing eyes in the night. Gusty laughter sounded as some one got rid of a daring story and heavy perfumes mingled with the sharper scent of alcohol and cigarettes.

Linda surreptitiously pinched herself to see if she were awake. It seemed impossible to believe that only a few hours distant she had been a poor little, inconspicuous, job-hunting mouse with the sword of Damocles that was the first of the month hanging over her. She brooded soberly.

"I'll wake up yet and find that Mother McCann is hounding me for back board," she assured herself.

At length the long-drawn-out dinner hour concluded and the local banditti sat down to a session of the pasteboard. Linda, who didn't know whether bridge was something they put across a river or in your mouth, wandered the length of the card-room and caught Macklin Porter's signal when she was near the French doors that were ajar to the summer dusk. She, seeing that Porter seemed to be suffering from some excitement, allowed him to lead her out into a flag-paved sun-porch and waited until he made certain there were no busy little eavesdroppers hanging around.

"What ho?" Linda queried sweetly.—The blond youth drew a breath.

"Pumped Mrs. Carney and got—what do you call it?—an earful. Information, that is. Pam's room is in the same wing and on the same side of the house as yours. Remarkable, what? Did you notice me busily engaged with pencil and paper?"

"I thought," Linda observed, "you were jotting down a spirit message—a Scotch one."

Porter fished in a pocket of his well-cut dinner coat and produced an envelope.

"I've drawn a little diagram of the rooms upstairs and marked Pam's with a large, black X. You can't miss it. Listen. Around that side of the house is a jolly old balcony. Simplest thing in the world! All you have to do is use the balcony, slip into Pam's room, pinch the pyjamas and exit laughingly."

"Sounds like a cinch," Linda retorted, taking the floor-plan and secreting it in the dazzling evening gown. "I'll make a stab at it later on. You don't happen to know what hour Miss Payne retires, do you?"

In the shadows she saw Porter color.

"You do ask personal questions! No one gets to bed down here at Port Fortune much before midnight and the majority considerably after that. Do your best. I'm in a fever of suspense."

"Take 'em off and wear a belt," Linda laughed.

It seemed that Porter was due to make a fourth at one of the tables, so after wishing her all the luck in the world, he went back into the card-room. Inside, the smoke fog and the aroma of decanters made the warm air stuffy and unpleasant. Linda glanced in, sniffed, shrugged and turned away. Outside, the star spangled night called to her with the quiet voice of the tranquil countryside. She slipped out, took a little

twining path and came upon a garden where roses dreamed and diamond-dew was like frost on the grass.

Near a sun dial there was a stone Roman bench warm from the day-long sun. Linda sat down and arranged her skirts. After the cat chorus that serenaded her nightly from the backyards, the jangle of hectic Manhattan and the racket of Mother McCann's, the quiet was almost uncanny. A pale moon was a luminous circle in the blue plush of the sky; stars blinked down, and a vagrant breeze sighed among the flowers. Linda tried to put her mind on the question of the big pyjama swipe, the task confronting her and the promised reward, but the effort was useless.

For no good or apparent reason she began to think of love. Questions knocked on the doors of her heart. Was she fated to travel alone, always down a hard and narrow road? Back in the days of early girlhood she had had romantic dreams—dreams of a young lover who would some day come to lay his heart at her feet—some one with brown, laughing eyes that would be a shade darker than his attractive sun-tan, some one with a lean, handsome face and gentle hands. Linda stirred. She had found only the head-hunters of Longacre, drunken, joy-riding youths who cared only for a girl's company for a night of the flowing bowl and love-making. She had encountered only those elderly, worldly-wise rascallions who wove crafty nets and arranged subtle dead-falls from which their victims never emerged unscathed. A little bitterly she remembered herself fencing with them, refusing to be lured from the straight road by their temptations. It seemed that a girl in her position always had to be on the defensive, to be alert and careful lest one mistake throw open the doors of doom in a world that was essentially a man's world.

"Miss Wand?"

The voice coming out of the shadow thickets aroused Linda and snapped the gloomy thread of meditation. She looked at the figure who came toward her, not recognizing Paker Face Carney until he was beside the stone bench. Without invitation he dropped down beside her, snapped away the stub of his cigarette and chuckled under his breath.

"I've got it at last, bright eyes. For a fact, it was turning me for a loop—I mean, where I saw you before. You can't kid me, girlie. Last season you were doing a buck-and-wing in the front line of that show down at the Stuyvesant. I remember marking the program at the time and, just by luck, I happen to have the program tucked away in my desk. About ten minutes ago I went up and dug it out. There was the old pencil mark right around your monicker. You're Linda Leslie, and that Philadelphia society-girl stuff is the bunk! Hawkshaw, the eye that never sleeps—I'm him! What have you got to say to it?"

As he spoke Linda felt a nerve within her fluttering a warning. His persistency to divulge her identity and keep the fame of his high-powered memory untarnished annoyed her, and annoyance helped to check dismay. Giving him a level glance, she laughed coolly:

"What have I got to say? Only that while two pints make a quart one quart can make a dum-bell—of any one. You must be plastered to wise-crack like that, little pal. Where do you get that hop, anyhow?"

Carney chuckled again.

"Your patter signs the warrant. Philadelphia society girls couldn't spill that lingo if they tried. I've got you hands down, good-looking."

"You think you have! What are you going to do about it?"

He leaned closer, and she caught the fumes of his breath.

"I don't know what your game is—

coming here with that Porter fathead and pulling the other-woman's-shoes thing—and what's more, I don't give a hoot in hell! I've got a hold on you, and that's all I want. I'm one of those boys who get an inch and wind up with a limousine and a furnished apartment. Be nice to me, and for all I care, you can glom the old gent's sterling silver, the rugs and the grandfather clock. Ritz me and get upstage, and I'll kill the highhat stuff so quick you'll think lightning struck you. The minute I saw you I made you as being a pretty nifty little moll—you can guess the rest."

Drawing away, her pulses throbbing, Linda looked at him.

"Guessing and opening-soft-boiled eggs are two things I'm rotten at," she informed him. "You'll have to broadcast."

Carney leaned closer.

"I want a little affection. I'm starved for a little loving, and you're just the type of frail who can supply it. Come on, you're wise enough to know when you're in a corner. You wouldn't want me to step inside and bawl you out as an imposter. Let's make a date for later on."

For the first time since he had joined her, Linda began to realize the workings of a fate that had once been whimsical, but which had turned somewhat malevolent. Carney was no bluffer, she was certain. Men of his calibre had been everyday occurrences in the Rialto showshop. They cornered a girl and gave no quarter. With a sinking heart she thought of Macklin Porter, the hand-embroidered pyjamas from the *Rue de Rivoli*, the breach-of-promise suit pending and the one thousand dollars she had been promised. Abruptly, she cleared her mind of its confusion and strove to think calmly, logically. If she could only stall Carney along until she had helped herself to the pyjamas and had given them to Porter, she would not care how loudly or in what

tone of voice the one beside her might show her up.

Suddenly growing gracious, she braved the wine-blasts of his breath and gave him her eyes.

"It looks like you win," Linda said, forcing just a trace of bitterness into her statement. "Go ahead—get the rest of it off your chest."

Carney's first look of suspicion vanished slowly.

"My room is down the hall from yours," he declared. "It's near the stairs. Drop in any time after one o'clock and I'll mix you a drink that will tear the shoes off your feet. Get me? And don't forget this. Try any double-crossing and you'll be the sorriest girl in fifty-three states! I'm a devil when I get going!"

"I know when I'm up against it," Linda answered briefly.

Carney stood, jingling some loose coins in a pocket.

"You'd better go in now. Sticking around out here might make that big half-wit side-kick of yours suspicious."

Within the house, Carney left her to get a drink, and Linda, worried and troubled, sought Porter to acquaint him with the news of the unexpected dénouement. She found the resident of the Hotel Selwyn, but he was not alone and no longer a bridge addict. Standing close to a divan, Porter was conversing with a sun-tanned youth, at the sight of whom Linda's heart seemed to cease beating. He was a tall, handsome individual with broad, athletic shoulders and brown, laughing eyes. These eyes encountered her own and again a spark bridged the separating gap. Overcome with wonder that made her hot and cold by turns, Linda only half heard Porter's introduction.

"Eh, Marion, I want you to meet Mr. Clifton Tennant. Remarkable, what? Tennant, you know, is the lucky chap who is engaged to Pamela Payne."

#### IV

THE night's drama, Linda was bright enough to see, promised to doff the mask of comedy and replace it with the severe false face of tragedy. In her room, the salt-laden breeze still billowing the expensive draperies, and with a traveling-clock on the dresser marking the hour of midnight exactly, she finished her fifth cigarette and unveiled her cloudy eyes. The tough part of the whole thing was not so much that Macklin Porter had a pair of silly pyjamas made to his order in Paris, or even that Poker Face Carney imagined he had her in a trap, as it was that she found her ideal on the verge of matrimony and lost to her forever. Linda wasn't certain if there were such a thing as love at first sight. She only knew that the Clifton Tennant she had seen first in the Club Trouville and who had come down to Port Fortune to be near his beloved was the living counterpart of that same young lover who had so long existed only in the enchanted cottage of her imagination. When she thought of him, the hot and cold tingles swarmed through her like strange tides that made her heart pound and her red lips quiver.

The ironic side of it assailed Linda. Pamela Payne had promoted herself cleverly. Clifton Tennant was blissfully unaware of the fact that she had ever been engaged to Macklin Porter, was unaware of the transparent pyjamas and even of the impending breach-of-promise suit. If the voluptuous Pam kept her pyjamas, Porter would be unable to raise the fifty grand necessary to hush the matter up and Tennant would learn of her early romance. Possibly this would make her second fiancé shy off. Linda wasn't certain about it, but she knew that by stealing the pyjamas herself and turning them over to Porter she was removing the only obstacle that

loomed up between Pamela Payne and the handsome Tennant.

And the trouble was that she had to play fair with Porter. Failing to live up to the letter of her agreement with him would be the same as telling a four-year-old child that Santa Claus had committed suicide.

"What a mess!" Linda sighed.

The moving hour hand of the traveling-clock told her that if she was to take advantage of the sixty minutes that were hers, she had best be up and doing. Arousing herself, Linda took off the evening gown and cast about for something more suitable to wear on her nefarious errand. High-heeled slippers and a gorgeous creation that knocked 'em cold had never been intended for high-class burglary or even petty larceny. Accordingly, Linda put on a pair of heel-less Turkish slippers and a thin, silk-en dressing-robe, with a broad sash about its middle, which permitted ample freedom of movement. Studying Porter's roughly drawn floor-plan for a space, she finally inclined her red-gold head, snapped out the lights in the room and cautiously looked up and down the outside balcony. It was deserted, empty of all things save the dense, almost tropical gloom made by the branches of the trees above and beside it.

As silently as a card-playing husband returning to the home fires after a night of winning, Linda fit her feet to the balcony and began to creep along it. Each room had a window, and according to Porter's sketch, Pamela Payne's room would be the seventh in line from her own. That meant she had to pass six windows. Linda touched the sill of each as she went stealthily by, came upon the window of the room checked with the large black X and knelt beside it. Its sill was low and its lower sash was elevated. Within was swirling blackness, gloom redolent of a heavy sachet and perfume she had detected

on Pamela Payne, and which, she knew, sold for thirty dollars an ounce. Indisputably, it was the right room. Drawing a breath like a high diver about to whirl into space, Linda straddled the sill, drew herself over it and dropped noiselessly down on to the room's muffling carpet. She knew that her prey was still downstairs and that if she worked quickly, she had every chance of crowning the effort with success. The only trouble was that Miss Payne, finding the young gentleman she was about to sue at Port Fortune, might have played it safe by concealing the pyjamas somewhere out of reach of the fingers of himself or his agent.

Yet, nothing ventured meant nothing gained. Waiting until her eyes became accustomed to the dusk, Linda put herself in motion. She tried the bed first and felt under each of its two pillows, but there was nothing there except the ends of a couple of starched sheets. She explored further and discovered a clothes-closet opposite the door of the bath. There were numerous garments, slinky and scented, drooping from hangers and books, but no pyjamas. Baffled but not beaten, she dared to strike a match, cupped it in her hands and, by its fire-fly flicker, made out the square of a shiny week-end bag that stood on the other side of the bed. As luck would have it, the brass latch and catches of the bag were unlocked. It was the work of not more than three and a half seconds to divide the thing in two and rummage through it.

Most of the bag's contents had been removed, although a few cosmetic-jars rolled around under a golf sweater and kept a pair of buckskin shoes from being lonely. Linda wrote that half of the luggage off and turned to the other. That side had two straps, and once these straps, were unbuckled, her fortune took a turn for the better. Here, she discovered, beneath a folding of linen-covered



pasteboard, a compartment, and in the compartment her investigating fingers felt silk. With a little thrill of triumph, Linda dragged out the compartment's contents. One was the trouser section of a pyjama suit, the other thing was its jacket, and under her excited touch, she was able to detect the bumps made by lavish embroidery, or so she thought. Bundling the garment up, she thrust it under her dressing-gown, buckled the straps and shut the bag.

Then, her breath catching in her throat, she jerked her hand around, a spasm of fright trickling down her spine like tiny drops of ice water. Footsteps that had come up the outside corridor had halted at the door. A knob creaked and clicked and the door, opening, let in a pencil of light. There was only one thing to do, and Linda did it. The bed was a foot and a half distant from where she crouched. Flattening herself out on the floor with a quick agility that surprised her, she wriggled noiselessly under it, arriving in its shelter and making herself as small as possible synchronous with the closing of the door and the turn of the wall-switch that flooded the chamber with mellow light.

Presented with a worm's-eye view of a pair of smart slippers, trim ankles and a portion of symmetrical legs, Linda knew that the visitor was the room's proper occupant, Pamela Payne herself. The feet moved indolently about. Followed a yawn, the crisp whine of the window-shade as it was pulled down, the swing of the closet door as it was shut and more yawns.

"I hope she yawns her silly head off!" Linda told herself grimly.

She saw that Pamela was obviously weary and intended to retire immediately. The bed creaked as the woman sat down on it. The tip of one slipper nudged the heel of the other and a foot came out of it, which performed

a like task. Stabbed by the dread of discovery that would come if the other got down to hunt up shoe-trees or anything, Linda waited. Shoe-trees, however, were nothing in Pamela Payne's amorous existence. She carelessly tossed her shoes under the bed,—Linda had to duck to keep from being hit—drew off the spidery stockings and went on with the business of undressing. Finally she put on a negligé and lighted what probably represented a good-night cigarette. As she finished scratching the match, a quiet tap sounded on the door, and Linda drew her brows together thoughtfully.

Sounds like the knock in the third act of a bedroom farce, she thought. Who the dickens can this be?

An answer was supplied almost immediately. Pamela Payne went to the door, opened it warily, and from her sanctuary, Linda saw the pedal extremities and carefully creased black-braided trousers of the man who entered on tiptoe. The door was shut silently, and Poker Face Carney's silky tones said:

"Taking the hay already, Pam? What a night-owl you've turned out to be! I've been trying to buzz you all evening. I've got something important to let you in on."

"What? Keep your voice pitched low and have a care or two. This isn't a Broadway hotel with sound-proof walls. What's up?" Pam demanded.

Carney stood beside the vanity table while Pamela brushed her long bob, and Linda watched them.

"That Marion Wand dame that Yellowtop brought down is a ringer," he explained succinctly. "She's a phoney all right and no more a society belle than I'm an acrobat!"

"I suspected as much!" Pamela Payne exclaimed sibilantly. "She looked Forty-second Street to me, but you can't tell nowadays when the debs try to dress like chorus girls and the

"It's Macklin's stunt, of course," Pamela Payne said swiftly. "He's after the pyjamas!"

Linda's heart stood still for the second time. She visioned the Payne woman rushing to the week-end valise for an immediate examination. Another yawn sounded and Carney chuckled.



*"Pleasant dreams, baby"*

chorus girls try to dress like the debs. Did you get any hope?"

"A wagon full!" Carney replied. "Her name is Linda Leslie, but she wouldn't tell me what her game is."

"The pyjamas, eh? I'm laughing from you. On the level, Pam, when are you going to get through rolling these money hounds and take the trail with yours eternally? I'm darn sick

and tired of sticking around while you clean out the pocketbook crowd with Sternberg's help. Another thing—the old gent has been peevish ever since he found out I raised that last cheque he gave me, and right now he's giving me my last chance—but without funds! I'm so low I could walk under a grasshopper on stilts!"

From the scenario of feet Linda realized that the brunette had gone over to Carney's chair and had perched herself on its arm.

"Don't you worry, honey boy," she cooed. "Stick it out a little longer. There'll be that fifty grand Macklin will cough up and then for Tennant. Right now I've got him promising to write me when he leaves for Maine next week. We'll get a few mushy letters and dig up another piece of change. He'll be the last one, and then I'll be through. This game is getting a little dangerous."

"Tennant," Carney observed, "ought to come across with plenty. He's one of those chivalrous lobs who tumble like autumn leaves. No pyjamas are necessary in his case, and that reminds me——"

He added something, the significance of which made Linda part her red lips in profound amazement before she narrowed her eyes.

"Well," Carney concluded, through with his astonishing revelation, "I guess I'll be stepping. I've got a date for one o'clock, and I'll let you have all the news in the morning. Pleasant dreams, baby."

There came the sound of a kiss, the opening and closing of the hall door, Pamela Payne's bare feet on the rug again. The sound of water running in the bath adjoining awoke Linda from the spell that snared her. With an effort, she dismissed the thought of the blackmailing Pam, of what Poker Face Carney had divulged and began to consider the idea of an escape. Lying cramped and chilly un-

der the bed of an adventuress was not the most desirable thing in the world. Linda decided to make a break for it once the other was in her bath and resigned herself to another dash of watchful waiting. Five minutes or more elapsed, and then the negligé fluttered to the floor like a stricken butterfly with colorful wings, one or two other intimate articles of apparel followed, and, doubling for Eve, Pamela Payne sauntered into the bath where a splash followed.

Waiting no longer, Linda uncoiled herself and crept out from under the bed. A dozen steps carried her to the window. She inched it up, and with a backward glance, wriggled out across the sill. The strategy, giving every indication of success, was marred almost at its final curtain. Then, swinging around for a complete exit, Linda's slipped foot caught in the top rung of a small chair, upset it and sent it crashing to the floor. Her impressions of the next few cycle of seconds were blurred and chaotic. She heard a scream in the vicinity of the bathroom, glimpsed the white, dripping figure that loomed up in its doorway and lost several valuable seconds trying to recover the slipper that had come off in its encounter with the chair. She finally found it and gained the balcony, but the screams of Pamela Payne had found a measure of reward. All along the elevated verandah lights were springing up in windows.

With her heart thumping like a triphammer, Linda faced the prospect of reaching her own room before the midnight riot completely prevented it. In a flurry of apprehension she sped on, the cries from the bathroom growing faint behind her until she was beside the window, had gone through it and was breathing her relief—a relief that lasted for one convulsive moment.

"Who's there?"

The question, asked sleepily, came

out of the darkness not two feet away from where Linda stood. She jumped back with a little cry. She realized it was not now, the question of getting into the wrong room in her confusion. The important thing was, whose room had she gotten into? And it was too late to attempt a nose dive back through the window, for the occupant of the room had arisen, taken up a position between herself and the balcony and had lowered both the lower sashes of the window and the shade over it.

"Who's there?" he demanded again. "Speak up or I'll shoot!"

"Don't do anything rash like that," Linda quavered. "It's only me, and I guess I'm in the wrong room."

A click that wasn't an automatic being cocked followed and a lamp beside a bed with its sheets and blankets turned back dawned like a little sun. Before her, resplendent in lavender pajamas, a nickel-nosed gat in his right hand, stood the youth with the brown, laughing eyes and the mahogany sunburn. The expression on his attractive face was one of ludicrous surprise, and Linda could not suppress the laughter that gushed to the threshold of her scarlet mouth like a bubble from a still, clear depth.

"You *do* look so funny!" she giggled.

He discarded the cannon and eyed her, still agape.

"What—what the dev—deuce are you doing here? This must be some sort of a nightmare? I—I was just dreaming about you." He stared at her. Gee, she was beautiful!

Linda understood that being both rudely awakened and startled out of himself was responsible for the naïve confession. Flooded by some thing that was like great music, that heated her cheeks, opened her mouth and widened her eyes, she stared at him breathlessly, trembling. He appeared to recover more of his equanimity,

hunted up his cigarette case and let his brown eyes laugh across at her.

"At any rate," he continued, "you might give me an explanation. It isn't every night I'm visited by the charming fiancée of another man. And listen, what's all that racket outside?"

"I'm not the fiancée of another man and all that noise means that Miss Pamela Payne, who resides further down the hall, found a burglar in her room and is a little excited, which is perhaps natural under the circumstances. If you can keep me under cover until things get quiet again, I'll tell you the whole story. Is it a bargain?"

Clifton Tennant nodded.

"It is. You might begin with the Club Trouville and that first look you gave me that raised the dickens with my imagination. Help yourself to a cigarette and go to it."

Linda did, and while the outside tumult gradually diminished and a degree of early morning quiet folded its wings over Port Fortune again, she gave a recital of all the facts that were bricks in the edifice of Macklin Porter's plot. Watching the changing expressions on his lean face, she omitted nothing of what she had heard while under the bed in the other room, nothing of the conversation of the two blackbirds and while she imagined Tennant would grow gray and haggard with the pain inspired by her disclosures, she found he was actually smiling when she brought the narrative to a conclusion.

"So *that's* the kind Pam is?" He ran a hand over his square chin and nodded. "Of late I suspected that all is not virgin gold that glitters. I began to open my eyes, to realize that fascination is one thing and that true love is another. Beauty is a deadly bait—sometimes. It's taken these last few minutes to make me thoroughly understand what a blind, damn fool I've been, if you'll pardon my Swed-



*"I was dreaming about you"*

ish. No matter. I'm awake now. If you'll excuse me, I'll drop our friend Poker Face Carney a note of warning that will keep him from starting anything with you in the morning. I'll inform him that I'm perfectly familiar with his game and threaten to betray him to his father if he so much as opens his mouth. Then, dark and late tomorrow morning, I'll tell Pam a few things."

"That will be so much better than writing her," Linda smiled. "It seems fairly quiet now, so I'll mush on to my own quarters. Thanks ever so much for the refuge. I'd better get going before some one hears me in here."

She turned to the window, while Tennant, digging a pigskin writing-case out of his kit-bag, stopped her with a gesture.

"One minute. You've told me about the pyjamas Pam was holding over Porter's head, but you've left something out. Did or didn't you recover them?"

Linda dipped her hand within her dressing-gown and produced her

plunder. They were pink silk pyjamas, as she knew, diaphanous enough to suit the most exacting, and heavily embroidered, but they had never seen Paris or had known the needlework of a French woman. At the neck of the jacket was the blue and white label of a Fifth Avenue department store. Linda held them up and laughed.

"I did forget to explain, didn't I? Speaking about pyjamas that can be used for breach-of-promise suits with signatures and passionate verses embroidered all over them—well, there ain't no such animal. With my own ears I heard Poker Face Carney telling our friend Pamela what a knock-out she was at bluffing and what Mr. Porter would say if he ever suspected that the pyjamas he brought over from Paree went to a laundry some

two years ago and, like the little pig that went to market, *never returned*. So ends the lesson! Good night—good morning, I should say—and don't forget to make that letter to old Poker Face plenty strong! Being shown up for an imposter isn't quite the height of my ambition!"

Pushing up the window, Linda stepped out on the balcony and disappeared in the darkness.

## V

AFTER PORT FORTUNE, with its beach and dew-drenched gardens, the heat in the port of New York was intolerable. Still, Linda with the thousand dollars that Macklin Porter had given her for bringing him not the pyjamas in question but the information necessary to make him comprehend he had nothing to fear from the buccaneer in petticoats, hardly seemed aware of the weather conditions. Laughing Mother McCann's off, she had followed the grateful Porter's advice and had temporarily leased a two-room suite in a light-housekeeping apartment that rejoiced in the somewhat flamboyant title of Buckingham Chambers.

There, perched on the twenty-sixth floor, Linda strove to take stock of the situation, to decide what the future held and what the trouble was with her misbehaving heart. She had left Randolph Carney's Long Island villa immediately after she had broken the news of all the Friday night adventure to Porter. Porter, pretending she had received a telegram calling her back to Philadelphia, had motored her to Gotham. There had been no uproar over her departure. Poker Face Carney had leered silently, and Pamela Payne had gushed false regrets, but as Miss Marion Wand she had gone to Port Fortune and as Miss Marion Wand she had left. There was no disturbance there, but Linda entertained an inner turbulence that was

like a crying voice of yearning within her.

"I suppose," she told herself, "I'll get over it. What I need now is a job and plenty of hard work—the harder the tougher!"

On the second day of her residence in the Buckingham Chambers, Macklin Porter was announced and followed his feet into her handbox living-room. The pink-and-white, blond giant seemed out of humor and out of luck. He took a chair near the window, sighed like a blast furnace and rubbed a red ear.

"Funny thing, Miss Leslie. Ever since our jolly little party down at Port Fortune I haven't felt the same. I mean toward Marion. Remarkable, what? She's an admirable girl, and I thought I loved her devotedly, but I guess I don't. I imagine that I'm in love with *you*!"

"Imagine is right," Linda laughed. "You'd better take a late train for Philadelphia and tell Marion to make it snappy—I mean, so far as the wedding is concerned. It isn't safe for you to wander around this town, now that they're wearing the skirts short again and the reformers haven't put a bill in yet to prohibit the sale of cosmetics."

Porter got rid of another sigh.

"I'm in earnest. Look here, don't you think I know the real thing when I see it? I jolly well do! I love you, Miss Leslie,—Linda. Marry me, and let me prove it!"

Linda shook her head gravely.

"Even at the risk of being declared cuckoo, I'll have to turn you down as cold as the nose of a Polar bear—for your own good. You don't love me, and I don't love you, and that's that. Be a big strong man and entrain for that dear Philadelphia. You won't be sorry, believe me."

"I could run out and have a chat with Marion," Porter declared. "Frightfully strait-laced and all that sort of thing, but a good sport. Glad

you gave me the idea. Must look you up when I get back and let you know. By the way, met Rand Carney and he tells me that Pam and Poker Face have skipped out together. Well, *au revoir*."

For a long time after he had gone, Linda sat deep in retrospection. The belated summer afternoon waned and it grew dark. One by one the stars came out, and over the Palisades of New Jersey lightning flashed intermittently. She sat unstirring until the doorbell tinkled, arousing her. She went to answer it, opened it, and, for just a minute, imagined that Macklin Porter had changed his mind again and returned to renew his pleas. It was only when she turned on the light that Linda discovered her caller was the same youth she had last seen wearing bizarre, lavender pyjamas.

"You ran away," Clinton Tennant said huskily, "but I got my bloodhounds out and found the trail. This is my lucky day. I caught Porter just as he was breezing into the Hotel Selwyn, threatening him with instant death if he did not disclose your address, got it and—here I am!"

Linda lifted her eyes bravely.

"What did you follow me for?"

He kicked the door shut and took her hands in his.

"Just to tell you that I love you! Just to tell you that I've loved you since that first minute when you stared across at me in the Trouville! There is such a thing as love at first

sight! I know there is, because love came to *me* at first sight! I followed you to tell you that I love you and want to marry you!"

Linda drew a tremulous little breath.

"But I'm only a chorus girl out of work and all I've got in the world is a thousand dollars. Oh, please get me right. I twist Mr. Grammar into some awfully funny knots, this etiquette thing is over me like an umbrella and the high life is too high for me. I don't deny that I love you—I'm just crazy about you because you're my ideal and I used to meet you in dreams years and years ago, as they say in the movies—but I want to be fair. I want you to know the facts——"

She wanted to say something else, but Tennant drew her into his embrace, and with a little sigh, she relaxed, linking her arms loosely about his neck.

"I don't care if you talk the sign language! I don't care if you don't know the difference between a knife and a spoon!" he whispered. "I only know that I love you and must have you, so what difference does anything make but that? Linda! Look at me! Will you marry me?"

Opening the sea-blue eyes she had shut in a little swoon of ecstasy, Linda let them give him her answer while she yielded her red lips for the kiss that signed and sealed the pact and bargain.

---

## HARD-HEARTED

*By James Gabelle*

Were I a modern maid,  
I know just what I'd do;  
I would embalm my heart,  
With rosemary and rue.

And then, when suitors came,  
With words of ardent flame,  
I'd merely smile and say:  
"I'm busy as hell, today."

# Just a Scrap of Paper

By CONSTANCE EDDY

**T**IMOTHY stood on the narrow pier and curiously surveyed the girl to whom he had just played God. She stood there sobbing, as if the death he had denied her was something altogether precious. She was a scared-looking little thing in a dress that was much too tight and a green hat, sleazy and somewhat the worse for wear. A cloud gathered on Timothy's good-natured freckled face.

"Sure and what right has an expectin' mother to be killin' herself?" he demanded sternly. "Where's your shame, girl?"

The girl's pale lips quivered, but she didn't answer him. Only a fresh rush of tears to her swollen eyes gave evidence that she had heard.

Timothy Michael O'Toole had sailed the seven seas since he was thirteen years old, therefore in his thirtieth years he wasted no breath inquiring if the unhappy girl before him were married. Not a day over eighteen, Timothy concluded. Women were certainly fools.

"Broke?" he snapped.

The girl nodded.

"Friends?"

The girl shook her head.

"Where's the skunk that got you in this fix?"

Her thin white face twisted painfully.

"He got killed," she managed in a dismal voice. "Fell off a building."

The impulsive Celtic heart of Timothy O'Toole responded to the girl's downright misery.

"Say, that's too bad, sister." His big voice was gentle.

At the throbbing sympathy in his voice, something within the girl seemed to give away.

"I don't really want to jump over," she explained simply. "I want to go home. My folks have a farm up in Maine. But I can't go back without a marriage license. They're—they're respectable. They'd rather I was dead."

Timothy patted her thin shoulder: "Would they take care of you and the kid if you was married?"

The battered green hat nodded.

"If only I had a marriage certificate!" She leaned hopelessly against the nearest pier post. "Gee!"

Timothy watched her narrowly. She wasn't much to look at, this girl whose life he had saved; just an ordinary-looking female, with a kind of pinched face and rather stringy hair. Nevertheless, Timothy put his question with true Irish optimism:

"Haven't you some boy friend that would marry you? Somebody who'd be willing to help you out?"

The girl lifted sad blue eyes.

"I don't know any boys," she murmured dully.

"You see, sister, I've only got a few hours shore leave left." Timothy found himself strangely on the defensive. "My ship sails for China to-night. War stuff."

The girl said nothing. She wasn't interested in Timothy O'Toole or his ship that would sail away to the war in China waters. Her tragic eyes re-



turned hypnotically to the deep water below the pier. The muscles of Timothy's jaw tightened. He felt as if some unseen hand pointed an accusing finger at him. After all, it was so small a thing to make a person happy. Just a marriage license; just a scrap of paper.

Timothy extended a large hairy hand and drew the girl towards him.

"Listen, sister," he said kindly, "if all you want is a marriage certificate, Timothy O'Toole will see that you get one. I'll marry you this very day, and you can take the certificate home and show your folks you're as respectable as the next woman. What do you say to that?"

The shining expression that lighted the girl's plain features, embarrassed Timothy.

"But I'm leaving tonight, sister," he hastened to assure her. "Just like I told you, my boat sails for China. I don't know when I'll get around to

these parts again; maybe never." His deep Irish eyes measured her sharply.

"That's all right. They'll think my husband's dead." For the first time Timothy saw hope dawn in the colorless face. "You're so good to do this for a stranger! I didn't want to die." Her white lips trembled again. "I didn't want to die," she repeated quietly.

"A bargain, then," said Timothy O'Toole, "we'll run over to Jersey and get a license and a minister."

Five minutes before sailing time, Timothy walked up the gangplank of the good ship *Morning Star*. He walked rapidly, as if eager to make off for foreign parts. Once he turned and looked back towards the spot on the pier where he had, that day, saved a young girl's life.

"And that, Timothy Michael O'Toole," he muttered grimly to himself, "makes you a blooming bigamist."

## TO NATURE

*By Cory Cable*

Her face, as soft as an angel's,  
Is powdered with tender care;  
And a barber's deft and practiced touch  
Has given that form to her hair.  
Her eyes, alight like candles,  
Are touched with a drop of "glim,"  
While a pencil arches her eyebrows  
With lines both tender and trim.  
And as for her lips,—a crimson bud  
Just fresh from a dewy deluge—  
They're cleverly planned and craftily made  
With a masterly bit of rouge.  
Her teeth are whitened by pepsodent  
And brushed by a manicured hand.  
It's a fact, you can't dispute it,—  
Ain't nature simply grand?

# Married—And All That—

By JOHN BROOKES

GERALD THORPE opened one anguished eye and morosely contemplated his surroundings. The surroundings were strange. Gerald sighed and half closed his one usable optic while he squinted thoughtfully about him. The surroundings were just as strange as when he viewed them with his eye opened to full capacity.

"It would appear that this is some new sort of environment," he muttered slowly. "I do not recollect of ever having seen this place before."

With an agonizing effort, he managed to open the other eye. Queer as it may seem, the place was twice as strange when viewed with two eyes. He wasn't at home—that much was certain. There weren't any beige-colored stockings hung on the dresser at home, nor were there any pink what-you-may-call-'ems.

Gerald tried blinking his eyes very rapidly. The silk stockings and the what-you-may-call-'ems were still there.

"This is all very strange," he announced half aloud. "I probably am not the person I had in mind at all. Must have got me mixed up with somebody else last night. God knows, I'm not myself this morning!"

He raised himself on one elbow and discovered that he was reclining on a bed. It was a nice, soft, springy sort of a bed; just the sort he had always liked. But—and here was the awful part of it—the pillows were faintly scented with a most disturbing kind of perfume. Gerald groaned and swung

his feet to the floor. He tottered across the room and stared into the mirror. Another groan escaped him as his eyes wandered over his own visage.

"Gerald Thorpe!" said he severely, "you've been drunk again! I'm ashamed of you! Positively ashamed! Second time it's happened this week! Just look at yourself!"

The man in the mirror looked obediently. He shuddered and blushed at what he saw. For big, masculine Gerald Thorpe was attired in a suit of flimsy, clinging, all-revealing pyjamas! They were lavender in color; and to make up for the absence of sleeves, a delicate bit of lavender ribbon was strung through the neck.

"Good Lord!" groaned Gerald Thorpe. "What in hell has happened to me?"

"Gerald Thorpe," answered a musical voice from the doorway. "You have been slightly spiffed, and you went to bed in my pyjamas."

Gerald wheeled about and stared dubiously at the vision in the doorway. It was a rather smallish, feminine sort of person, with laughing blue eyes and copper-tinted hair. She was tightly wrapped in a glove-fitting dressing-gown. Gerald took another glance into the mirror and grinned sheepishly.

"Hullo, Monica," he murmured. "What is this, New Years, Yom Kippur, or——"

"You said it was your birthday," replied the girl quietly, as she extended a sizzling glass of seltzer.

"That was probably a falsehood,"

declared Gerald, with a frown. "I have never yet had a bona fide birthday in the middle of the winter."

"Well," shrugged Monica, "you certainly celebrated—whatever it was. We came home about two o'clock, had a few highballs; and you showed me how Salome danced to make Oscar Wilde—"

"Stop!" cried Gerald, while half his selzer ran out on the rug. "Did I pull that one?"

"You did!"

"Then I fear I was intoxicated," groaned Gerald. "What else did I do?"

"You changed your costume, and—"

"I what?"

"You put on those pyjamas and said you were going to show me how Cleopatra danced before Julius seized 'er."

"I did?" gasped Gerald with bulging eyes. "This is terrible. Why, I haven't been that drunk since my last birthday!"

Gerald buried his aching head in his hands and stared morosely at the floor. Little by little, the details of last night's celebration came back to him. They had attended a theatre, visited a night club; where he had, as usual, over-indulged in giggling water. He had a very hazy recollection of putting Monica into a taxi and escorting her to her hotel. And there, memory ceased to function.

"Ah," he cried at last, "I have it! I know the cause of last night's festivities. We were celebrating your divorce!"

"Yes," murmured Monica quietly, "it seems that I do remember of you saying something about that. But, my divorce isn't granted yet, you know. And we still have to be just a bit discreet. I am convinced that Roger has a detective watching me. Last night, a tall man with a black moustache followed us from the Beaux Arts. If Roger should ever be able to prove that you've been here all night—" She finished with an eloquent shrug and a convulsive shudder.

"That wouldn't be a bit nice," admitted Gerald. "There'd be no end of scandal. Of course, things are never as bad as they look. People are so filthy minded."

"We would never be able to convince anyone of our innocence," she sighed.

"Well," murmured Gerald, "if you'll give me a cigarette and my clothes, I'll get out of here before something serious happens."

Gerald got his cigarette, but something happened before he got his clothes. That something was a knock on the outer door. It was a most ominous sort of a knock.

"The devil!" gasped Monica in apprehension.

"Your husband!" amended Gerald, *en deshabille*.

And it wasn't two other fellows. Monica's shouted question brought the disturbing information that the visitor was none other than her lawfully wedded mate. Roger Stevens was thumping upon the door in a most impatient manner.

"It's him!" cried Monica, ungrammatically, but forcibly.

Gerald nodded dazedly. "I presume I'd better hide somewhere," he murmured vaguely. "Where is the best place?"

Now, if you've ever spent much time in hotel rooms, you know that the facilities for hiding a full-grown man are exceedingly meagre. Especially when the man is attired in lavender pyjamas. Fortunately, Monica had two rooms.

"Go out in the other room and talk to him," suggested Gerald. "Be polite but firm. Act innocent, but wise. Don't let him come in this room. If he gets nasty, refer him to your attorney."

"Good idea if it works," nodded Monica. "If it doesn't—"

She left Gerald sitting on the edge of the bed and puffing nervously upon his cigarette while she went away to converse with her husband. Roger Stevens was in an infuriated mood.

From the general trend of his conversation, it appeared that Monica had been right in assuming that he had hired a detective to watch her. Roger made several uncomplimentary remarks about, "that sap-faced bird you were with last night." Gerald blushed and got up to pace the floor.

"If I catch him, the courts can go to hell," declared Monica's husband. "I'll kill him and leave it for the court to decide whether or not I was justified!"

Gerald strode nervously to the window and looked out. It was eight stories up. A jump would mean almost certain death. But Roger Stevens was a big man. He was probably quite capable of carrying out his murderous threat.

"I'll kill him!" Roger was saying. "I'll strangle him with my own bare hands. And you, my dear, shall watch me!"

Gerald threw up the sash and leaned out. Eight stories *was* a terrible distance. And then, Gerald noticed a peculiar thing. There was a narrow ledge, perhaps a foot in width, running along the side of the building level with the bottom of the windows.

"I tell you he is here!" declared the man in the other room. "He came in with you about two o'clock—and he never went out again! If he's still here, you can have your divorce, and welcome to it; but you'll have a dead lover on your hands!"

"That's not exactly cricket," murmured Gerald. "I wonder why Roger—"

The question was never finished; for at that instant, a sudden commotion broke loose in the other room.

"I tell you I'm going to search your bedroom!" declared Roger. "If he's here, all right—if not, all right! I'm going to find out. You're still my wife, you know,—and I have a legal right to the premises."

Roger may have said more. Gerald did not wait to hear it. He stepped

through the window and out upon the narrow ledge. There were twelve inches of solid stone for him to stand upon; but never before had he realized how small twelve inches can be. Reaching behind him, he stepped to one side of the window, out of sight.

Gerald realized that the door to the room he had just vacated had been violently flung open; and that Roger Stevens was pacing and raging the length and breadth of that room, like a wild man in a side show.

"Hope Monica put my clothes in a safe place," he murmured.

The thought of clothes reminded him that it was decidedly cold out of doors. Those lavender pyjamas had never been intended for outdoor service. Gerald managed to twist about on his perch and peered cautiously through the window. Roger Stevens was seated on the bed, discoursing with Monica.

In desperation, he began to feel his way along the narrow ledge. Somewhere along the building, he must find an open window. He might be arrested; but even jail was preferable to death. Gerald ventured a glance toward the street; although he distinctly remembered that persons in high places should never look down. Down on the corner stood a man in a brown derby. The man was looking up. The man was looking at him! Gerald moved faster, trying to keep one eye on his footing and the other on the man in the brown derby.

The man was still watching him. Another man paused and followed the other's intent stare. Gerald muttered several naughty words beneath his breath. A policeman came sauntering up the street. The man in the brown derby grasped him by the arm and pointed upward.

Gerald's groping fingers sank into a depression and came into contact with smooth, cold glass. He fumbled for a moment with the sash. To his vast

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(*Labor Advocate*, Birmingham, Ala.)

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relief, it slid up, and a warm draft swept out and enveloped him. Another glance at the street assured him that the policeman was looking directly at him. Gerald stepped quickly inside and closed the window behind him.

He seemed to be in a bedroom. There was a lavatory, a white-tiled floor and—

"Well, who the hell are you?" demanded an outraged voice, with an accompanying splash of water.

"I beg your pardon, madam," stammered Gerald as he blushing turned back to the window.

"You certainly ought to," declared the voice. "Where on earth did you get those clothes?"

"Say!" exclaimed Gerald. "Your voice sounds mighty familiar to me. Are you—"

"Whoa!" interrupted the voice. "You just keep right on admiring the scenery outside. Just because my voice is familiar is no reason why you should be. And I still want to know where you got those pyjamas."

"It's a long, sad story," recited Gerald, keeping his gaze on the building across the street. "It has to do with a woman and her husband. The husband is seeking my life—"

"And the woman is probably seeking her pyjamas," chided his hostess. "I always told you you'd get in bad if you kept on running after Monica Stevens!"

Gerald wheeled about, his eyes bulging with amazement.

"Mildred!" he managed to gasp. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"Why not?" The girl was carelessly brushing her hair before the mirror. "I'm not prowling about in a suit of borrowed pyjamas, anyway. And I'm not crashing into stranger's bathrooms—"

"You're no stranger!" declared Gerald defensively. "And I must say that you look wonderful in that blue bathrobe."

"Yeah?" Apparently she was only slightly interested. "You'll find cigarettes on the window-sill. Suppose you light a couple."

Gerald obeyed. "Mildred," said he, as he proffered the lighted cigarette, "you are a wonderful and beautiful woman."

"This is a hell of a time for you to be finding it out," said Mildred carelessly. "I'm going to be married to-morrow."

"Married!" Gerald bit his lip and his gaze fell. It was rather a shock, this business of Mildred getting married.

"I'm sorry—damned sorry!"

"I wonder," she murmured softly, "if you really mean that."

Just how it happened, neither of them knew; but in another moment, she was tightly locked in his arms.

"I've been a fool!" said Gerald, brokenly. "A miserable, damned fool. I hope you will be very, very happy."

"Isn't— isn't there anything else you want to say?"

"There are a thousand things I'd like to say, if— What the hell is that?"

There seemed to be a great deal of confusion in the room which opened off the bathroom. Gerald caught the sound of many masculine voices speaking in excited tones.

Mildred called a heavy, masculine voice. "Are you all right?"

Mildred raised her head from Gerald's shoulder and replied.

"Of course I'm all right. What's all the noise? Who's out there?"

"Only the clerk, the hotel detective, a city policeman, an innocent bystander and myself. Can you come out?"

"I could; but I won't!" said Mildred. "What's the matter?"

"It has been reported to the office of this hotel that a man in lavender pyjamas was seen loitering about the outside of this building, and that he entered this apartment through a window!"

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"Good Lord," moaned Gerald. "I suppose I'll have to jump, after all."

"Hush!" whispered Mildred. Aloud she said. "Whoever heard of a man in lavender pyjamas walking around the eighth story of a hotel?"

There was a moment's silence; then the man's voice spoke again.

"Officer Green of the city police and Mr. Thaddeas Holcumb declare that they saw him."

"Officer Green should change his brand," declared Mildred. She winked mischievously at Gerald. "That guy with the heavy voice is the lad I'm marrying tomorrow," she whispered.

"Then you have seen nothing of a man in lavender pyjamas?" queried Mildred's future husband.

"I never saw anything like it!" she replied. "Why don't you birds run along and let me finish my bath?"

There was more confusion in the other room, and Gerald gained the impression that they were leaving.

"Thanks!" he said. "You might have screamed for help, you know, and had me tossed out on the pavement."

"But you'd look so messy in those pyjamas," she replied, lightly. "But let's get back to where we left off. You were saying something about being sorry because I was going to get married. Is that the truth?"

"Well, I—I guess I haven't much right saying such things to you, now."

"You have just as much right as you ever had," she murmured softly.

"Mildred—Mildred darling!" cried Gerald, brokenly.

"Well,—I'll be a dirty name!"

The explosive voice had an ominous ring to it. Gerald raised his head and looked over Mildred's shoulder. There in the doorway, stood Mildred's future husband!

"Who the hell are you?" demanded the man, advancing into the room.

"A very pretty little scene!" sneered Mildred's fiancé. "You—in those damned ladylike pyjamas! And you, my dear Mildred,—what is your

explanation of this scandalous scene?"

"Listen," said he. "I can explain all this. It is all a horrible mistake—"

"Hideous!" amended the other man. He turned sneeringly toward Mildred. "Since when, my dear," he inquired nastily, "have you been accustomed to have help in taking your bath?"

Mildred said nothing. The man snorted and strode to Gerald's corner.

"And, you," said he, shaking a monstrous fist beneath Gerald's nose. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm waiting for a street car," stammered Gerald, trying vainly to twist his pyjamas into a semblance of modesty. "You see, I was drunk last night; and this morning, I woke up in this hotel. I was in a room where my presence was not desired and—"

"Shut up!" snapped the big man, shoving his purple face into Gerald's white one. "By the time I'm through with you, you'll never wake up in a strange place again. I'll teach you to promenade about hotels in pyjamas and give baths to other men's women—"

"I wasn't giving her a bath," objected Gerald, weakly. "I never even touched her."

"A lie won't save you!" shouted the man. "I'm going to beat you to pulp—and then kill you! It is a matter of honor with me!"

"I think—" said Mildred, stepping forward and grasping the would-be assassin's arm, "I think this horse-play has gone far enough. Oscar, I must ask you to apologize to this gentleman and leave this apartment at once. You will understand that in the future, we are total strangers."

"Apologize to him!" snorted Oscar. "I'm going to kill him! There's nothing in the world that can keep an Overton from avenging his honor!"

"Honor!" gasped Mildred. "A hell of a lot you know about honor! Say, do you know who that man is? Of course you don't! I don't think he does either—but I do. He's my husband; and he'll still be my husband

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until tomorrow! If you wasn't such a fat-head you'd know that a divorce is not legal in this state until three months after the decree is granted. Gerald is still my husband, and he has a whole lot better right in this bathroom than you have!"

"Well, you damned big bum!" snorted Gerald Thorpe. "Break up my home, will you? Intrude upon the privacy of my wife's hotel room! Take that—and that!"

"That" was a resounding smack upon the nose. The big man retreated hastily. Gerald pursued him and managed to assist him through the door with a well-placed kick. He slammed the door and locked it. Then, he turned back to Mildred, with outspread arms. The woman crept slowly into them.

"Gosh!" murmured Gerald, after the first ecstatic kiss. "And we're still married until tomorrow?" Mildred nodded silently. Another long kiss.

"And after that?"

"Gerald Thorpe!" exclaimed Mildred, planting a warm kiss behind his ear. "Are you trying to propose to me?"

"One thing at a time!" cried Gerald, with a happy laugh. "I suppose we'll have to rush down and get a new license and have a new ceremony in the morning. Any objections?"

"Only one. Promise me you will never wear lavender pyjamas again! You really do look like hell in them!"

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Was David right, after all? Had the stark terror of that sunny morning,

All the horror through which the girl had passed turned her head?

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That hand, extended stiff and straight, the  
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Give me just this  
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I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them. Right now I'm even training hundreds of soldiers and sailors who KNOW they've got to get into shape FAST!

## Only 15 Minutes a Day

Are you ALL MAN—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you want the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, scrawny 97-pound weakling. And NOW it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of other men in only 15 minutes a day? The answer is *Dynamic Tension*, the amazing method I discovered and which changed me from a 97-pound weakling into the champion you see here!

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that *Dynamic Tension* can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

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